CatChanScans
becoming more and more elusive...
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without permission.
[P.S. the only ones
who HAVE permission,
are the following:
Lurk, Evil Empire,
Esthetique and MLFS.]
To all those others,
shame shame!!

TOKYOPOP

The Tarot Café™

SANG-SUN PARK

The Tarot Café

By
Sang-Sun Park
Volume 6

TOKYOPOP

HAMBURG // LONDON // LOS ANGELES // TOKYO

The Tarot Cafe Volume 6
Created by Sang-Sun Park

Translation - Jennifer Hahm
English Adaption - Kristin Bailey Murphy
Copy Editor - Stephanie Duchin
Lettering - Lucas Rivera
Production Artist - Michael Paolilli
Cover Design - Colin Graham

Editor - Alexis Kirsch
Digital Imaging Manager - Chris Buford
Pre-Production Supervisor - Erika Terriquez
Art Director - Anne Marie Horne
Production Manager - Elisabeth Brizzi
Managing Editor - Vy Nguyen
Creative Director - Anne Marie Horne
Editor-in-Chief - Rob Tokar
Publisher - Mike Kiley
President and C.O.O. - John Parker
C.E.O. and Chief Creative Officer - Stuart Levy

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TOKYOPOP Inc.
5900 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 2000
Los Angeles, CA 90036

E-mail: info@TOKYOPOP.com
Come visit us online at www.TOKYOPOP.com

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Story so far...

A sultan who has fallen in love with a young slave... A poor student who drives away a lake fairy over doubt and jealousy... A dragon that seeks to avenge the death of a dear friend... These are just a few of the supernatural beings that Pamela, owner of The Tarot Café, has welcomed through the doors of her mysterious establishment. But can she help them while dealing with a deep, dark secret of her own?

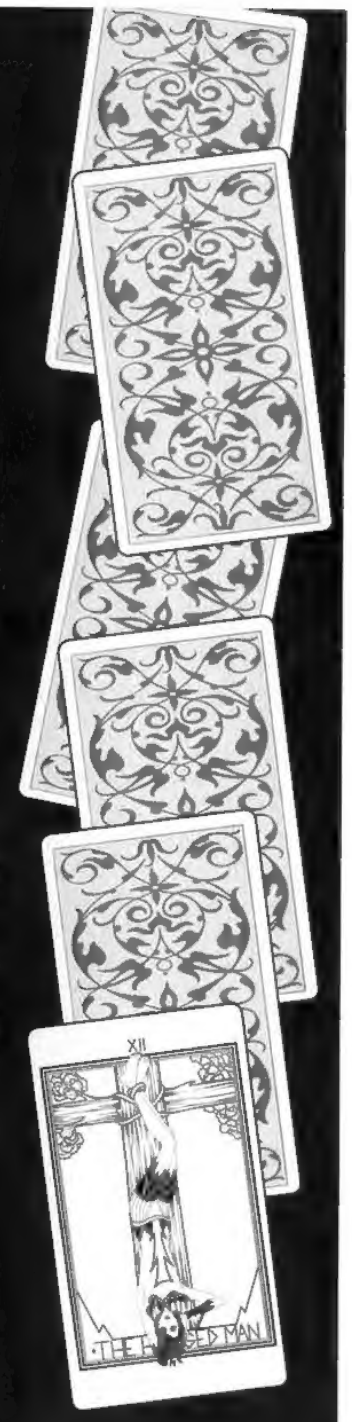


Table of Contents

Episode 17
Invitation to Hell ----------5

IX CONTEMPLATION

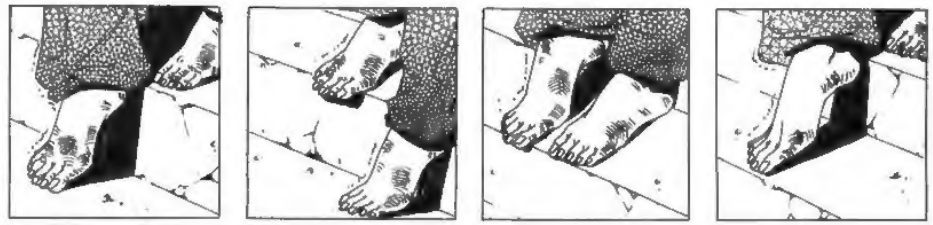
Illustration from the goddess tarot

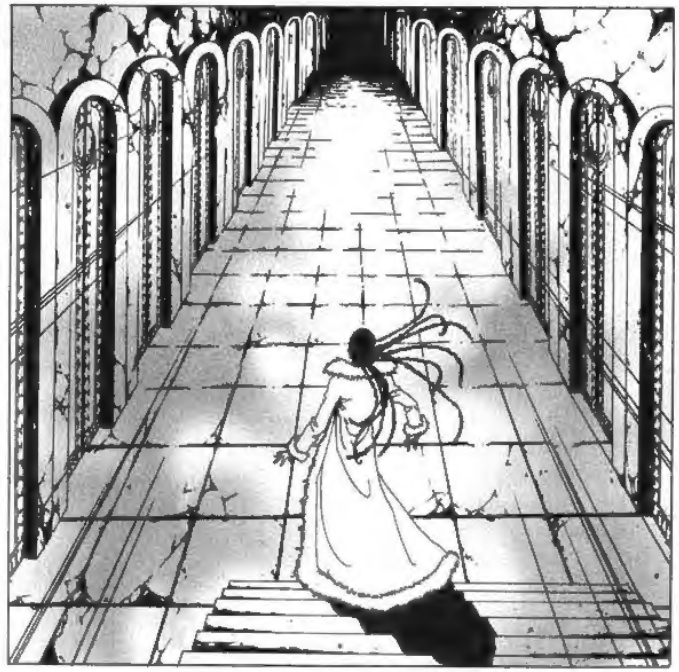
Episode 17:
Invitation to hell

CHANG O

MEANING OF THE CARD: The need to go within to gain knowledge to one's own divinity. Withdrawal to better contemplate life. Upside down, it represents distracted by the world, refusal to listen to intuition, no time to think or reflect.

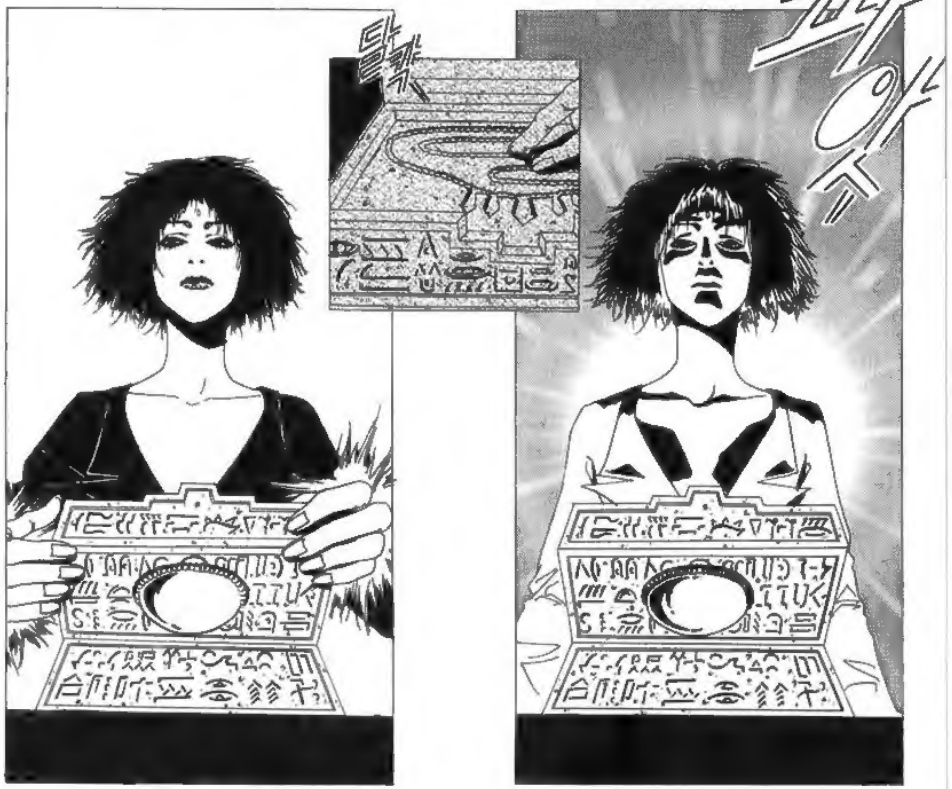
EL HOY





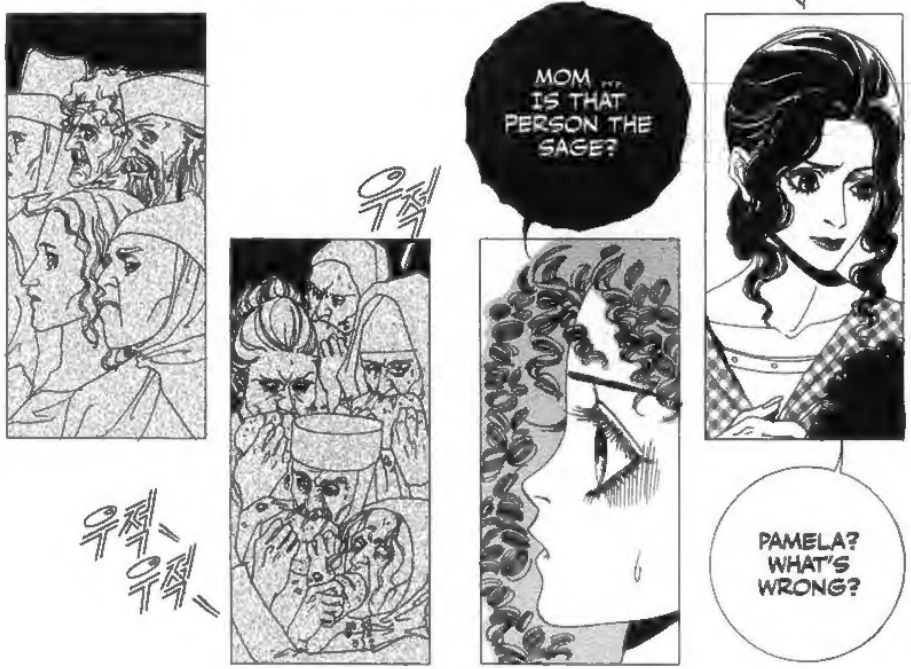
YOU SURVIVED THE JAWS OF DEATH.
WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS THIS? WHO COULD HAVE AFFLICTED SUCH HARM ON YOU?
THE REASON YOU'RE HERE... HAVE YOU COME SEEKING THE TRUTH?
THE PLACE I WENT WAS HELL...
IT WAS THE DEEPEST, DARKEST ABYSS OF ALL HELLS.
THE GREAT EMPEROR OF HELL'S DOMAIN... BELIAL'S CASTLE!!!

CAFE
TAROT
Spring 1995

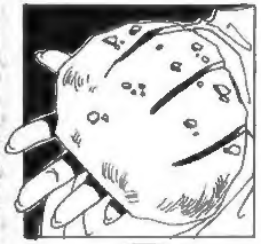


THEY SAY THAT ONCE A YEAR, THE GREAT SAGE COMES TO TOWN.
PEOPLE RECEIVE HIS BREAD, GET TREATED FOR SICKNESS, OR ASK ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.
LOOK--HE'S OVER THERE. WE SHOULD HAVE SOME BREAD, TOO.
DO YOU BELIEVE IN SALVATION?
DOES THE GOD YOU BELIEVE IN REALLY EXIST?

IT'S MERELY AN APPEALING FABLE, MADE UP BY THE STRONG TO REGULATE THE WEAK.
DID YOUR GOD EVER GIVE YOU BREAD?
NO-- WHEN YOU ARE MOANING IN PAIN, HE DOESN'T HELP YOU! HE DOESN'T EXIST!


MOM ... IS THAT PERSON THE SAGE?
PAMELA? WHAT'S WRONG?

LITTLE CHILD...
COME, HAVE SOME BREAD.



I CAN SEE YOUR TRUE FORM...

YOU'RE NO SAGE.

AND IT'S DIRTY, VILE AND DISTORTED.

?!!
PAMELA.
WHAT AN ADORABLE CHILD. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
NO HUMAN HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO SEE THROUGH ME BEFORE.
YOU AMUSE ME, PAMELA.

I APOLOGIZE... SHE'S YOUNG...
WE'LL BE SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN, PAMELA.
THAT MAN... WHO IS HE?
I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE...

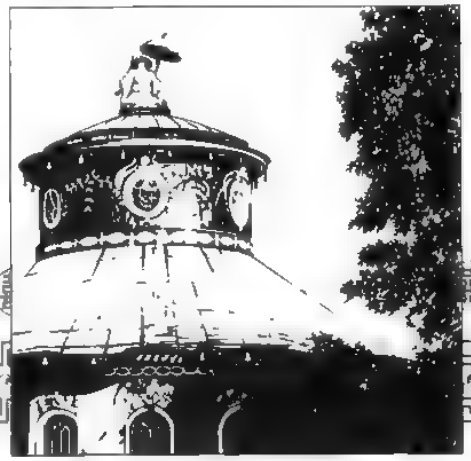
WHAT ARE YOU DOING--IT'S DARK IN HERE! AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE RUNNING A BUSINESS?
I HAVE TO BE GOING NOW...
W-WHAT?
STAY STILL FOR A MOMENT.
ELIZABETH II D:G:REG:F:D:
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
TA-DA! IT'S A MAGIC TRICK I FOUND ON THE INTERNET. PRETTY AMAZING, HUH?

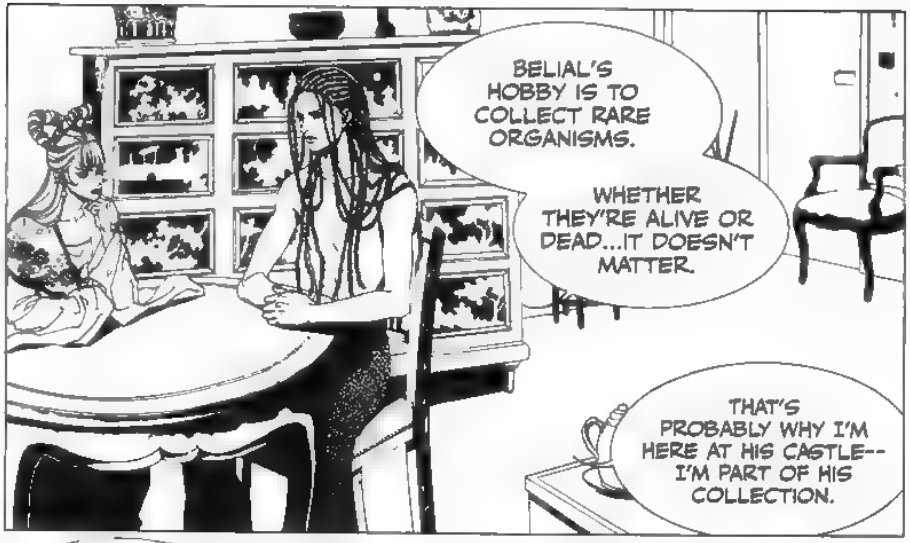
WHAT DO YOU MEAN *AMAZING?* YOU DORK!
SOSH

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S AMAZING: PART OF MY MEMORY NO LONGER EXISTS.

WHAT?

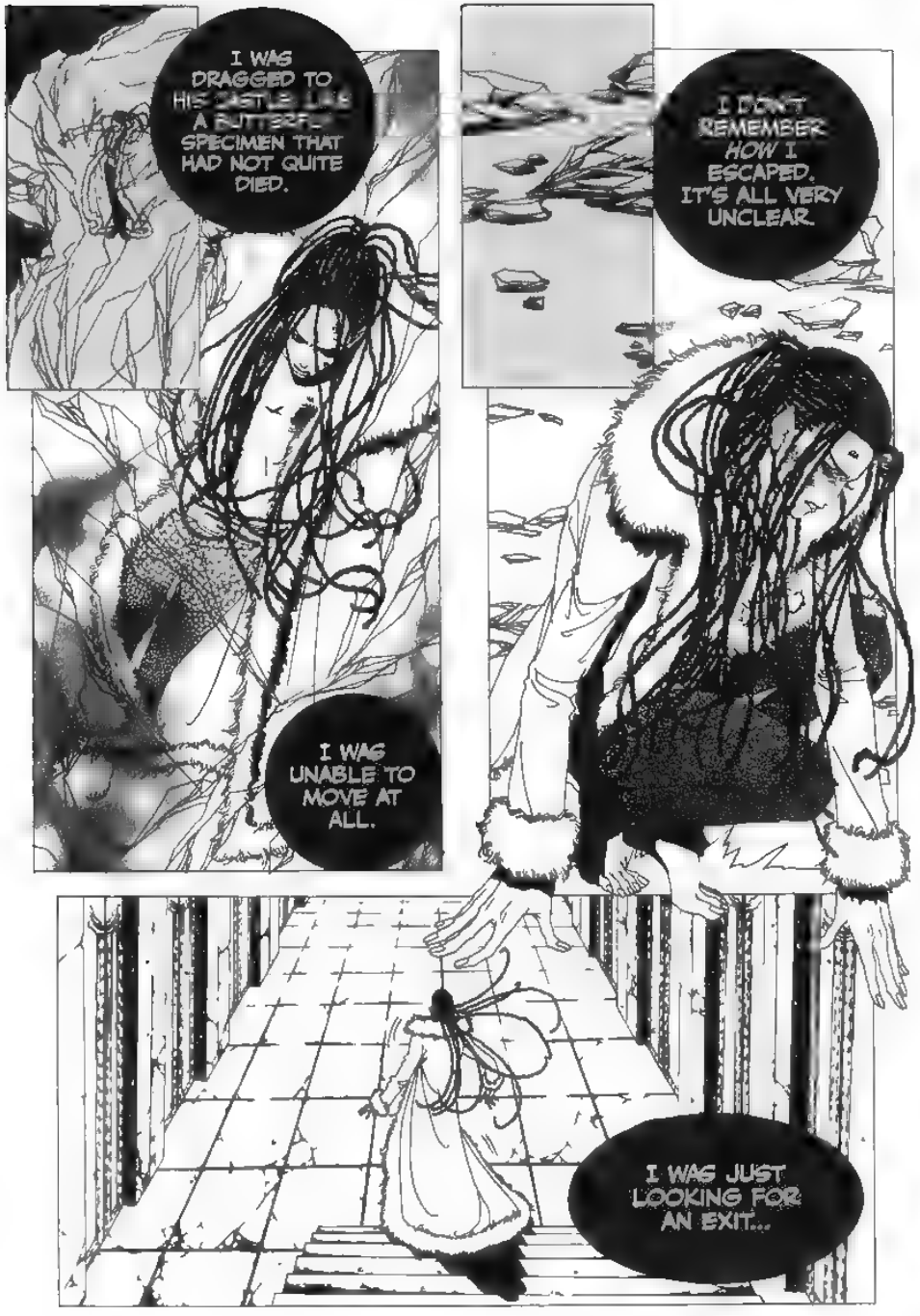
I THINK SOMEONE HAS ERASED MY MEMORY.



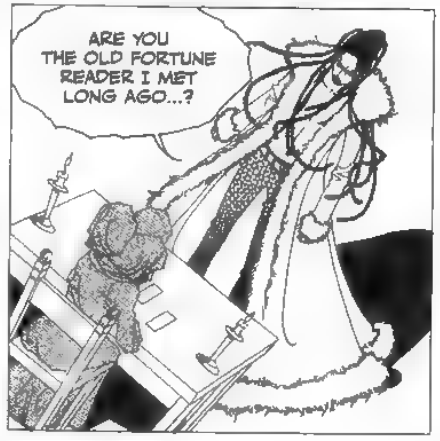

BELIAL'S HOBBY IS TO COLLECT RARE ORGANISMS.
WHETHER THEY'RE ALIVE OR DEAD...IT DOESN'T MATTER.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I'M HERE AT HIS CASTLE-- I'M PART OF HIS COLLECTION.

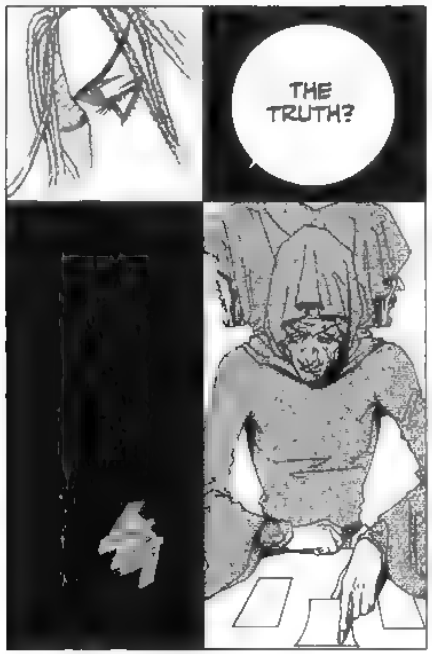
THE ONE YOU SPOKE ABOUT, THE ONE WHO HID BEHIND THE MOON-- THAT WAS BELIAL.
POOR BEING. YOU WHO BELONG TO NEITHER LIGHT NOR DARKNESS--SLEEP SOUNDLY.

ASH!!

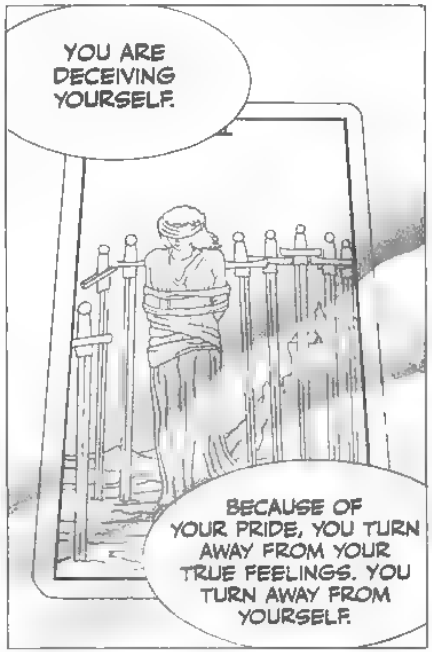

I WAS DRAGGED TO HIS CASTLE LIKE A BUTTERFLY SPECIMEN THAT HAD NOT QUITE DIED.
I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I ESCAPED. IT'S ALL VERY UNCLEAR.
I WAS UNABLE TO MOVE AT ALL.
I WAS JUST LOOKING FOR AN EXIT...

HEH, HEH, HEH... I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, ALECTO.



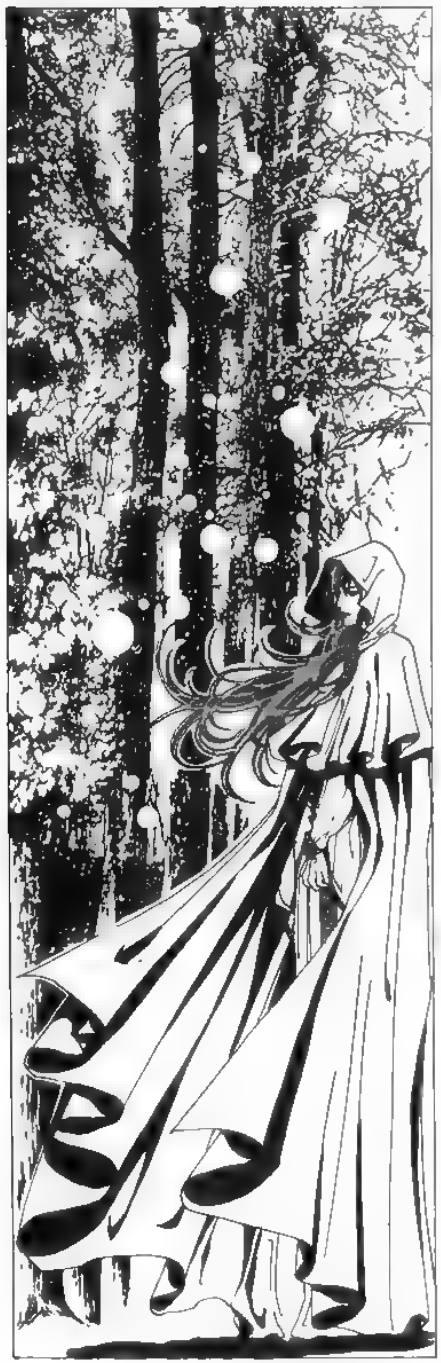


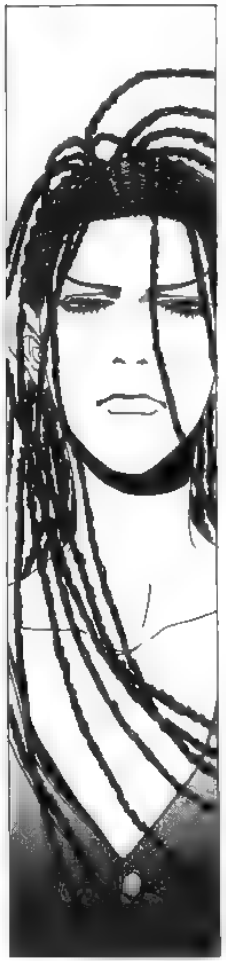
THE DEVIL: This card is symbolic for what is bad and undesirable. It refers to one staying in ignorance, remaining in bondage, and feeling hopelessness and despair.



Eight of Swords: this card stands for those times when we feel help is out of reach. It refers to one feeling victimized, trapped by circumstances, and being unsure of which way to turn for guidance and clarity.

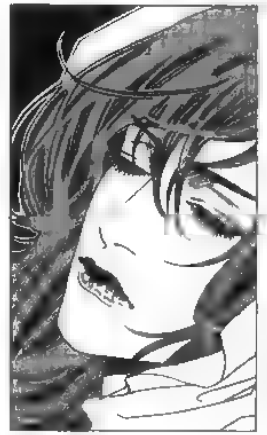
WHAT?!!
YOU JUST DON'T WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT.
IT'S FUNNY--YOUR COMPANION DOESN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE YOU. HE'S NOT EVEN INTERESTED IN YOU.
YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GET CLOSE TO THE TRUTH. YOU HAVE ONLY CIRCLED AROUND IT.
SECRETLY, THOUGH, YOU HAVE STOLEN GLANCES AT IT.
SO, ALTHOUGH YOU DON'T REALIZE IT, YOU *HAVE* SEEN TRUTH.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE EVENTS OF THAT NIGHT?

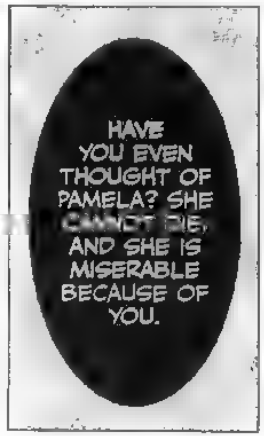




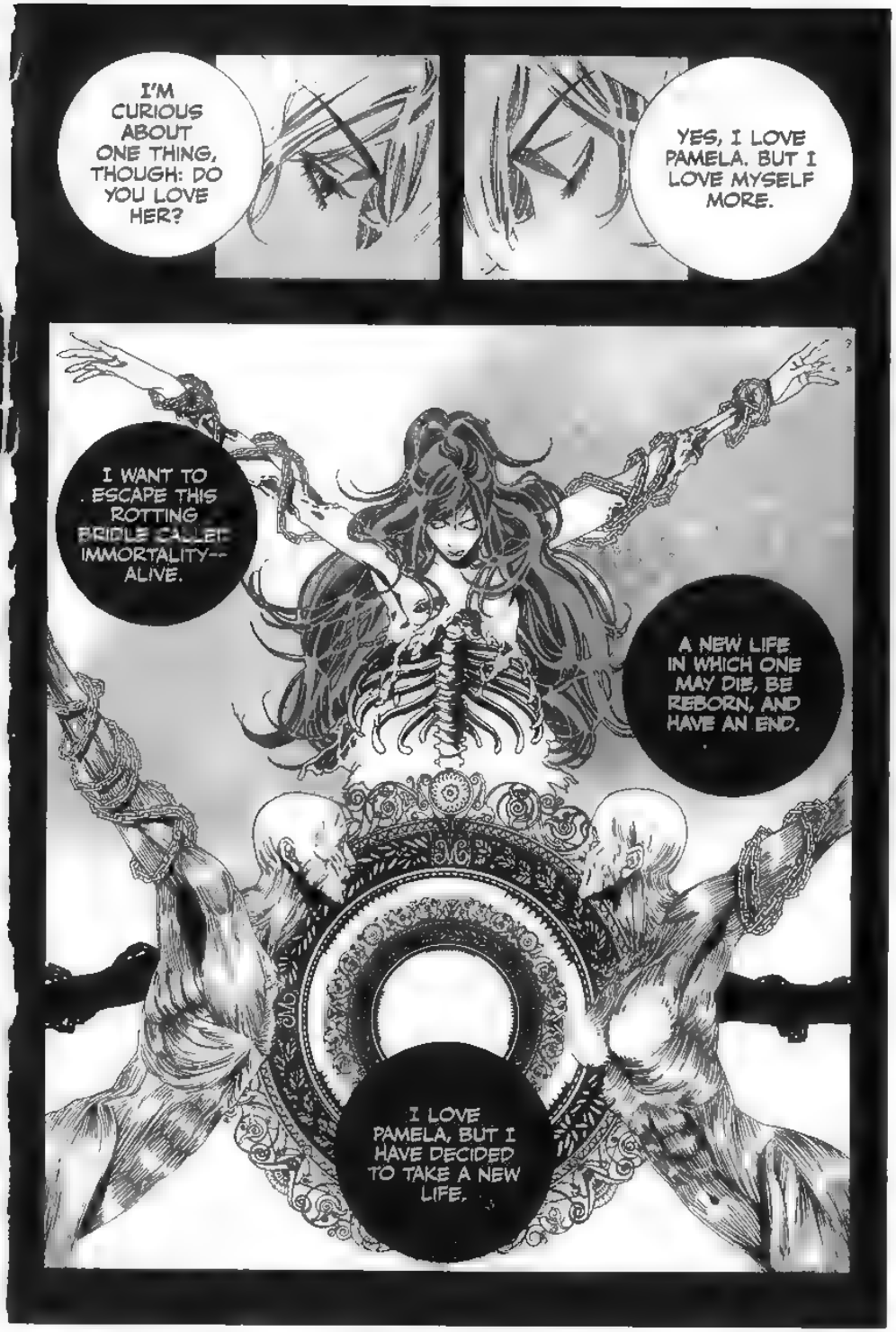
AM I LATE? I'M SORRY, ASH.

I WILL ACCEPT THE CONSE-QUENCES.

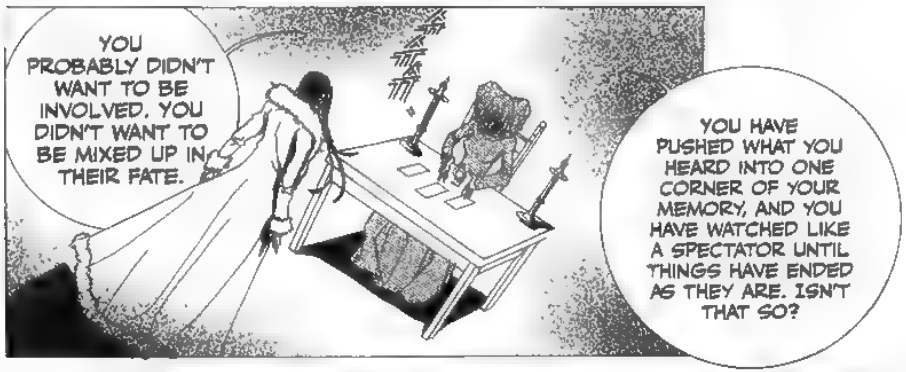




A PROMISE WITH THE DEVIL...
PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL KEEP THE SECRET.
HO, HO... YES, I PROMISE.


I'M CURIOUS ABOUT ONE THING, THOUGH: DO YOU LOVE HER?
YES, I LOVE PAMELA. BUT I LOVE MYSELF MORE.
I WANT TO ESCAPE THIS ROTTING BRIDLE CALLED IMMORTALITY-- ALIVE.
A NEW LIFE IN WHICH ONE MAY DIE, BE REBORN, AND HAVE AN END.
I LOVE PAMELA, BUT I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE A NEW LIFE.

YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN, HAVE YOU?


YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED. YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE MIXED UP IN THEIR FATE.
YOU HAVE PUSHED WHAT YOU HEARD INTO ONE CORNER OF YOUR MEMORY, AND YOU HAVE WATCHED LIKE A SPECTATOR UNTIL THINGS HAVE ENDED AS THEY ARE. ISN'T THAT SO?

YOUR PRIDE WAS HURT. NO MATTER HOW YOU TRIED TO IGNORE IT, THE FEELINGS ALWAYS REMAINED TO TORTURE YOU.
AND THE PEOPLE WHO CREATED YOUR SUFFERING DON'T EVEN CARE.
ISN'T THAT WHY YOU TRY TO HARBOR FEELINGS OF HATRED TOWARDS THAT WOMAN? SO THAT YOUR FEELINGS DON'T COLLAPSE INWARD?

ASH, HIMSELF, PROBABLY CHOSE DEATH.
AND THE PRICE FOR THAT WAS PAMELA.

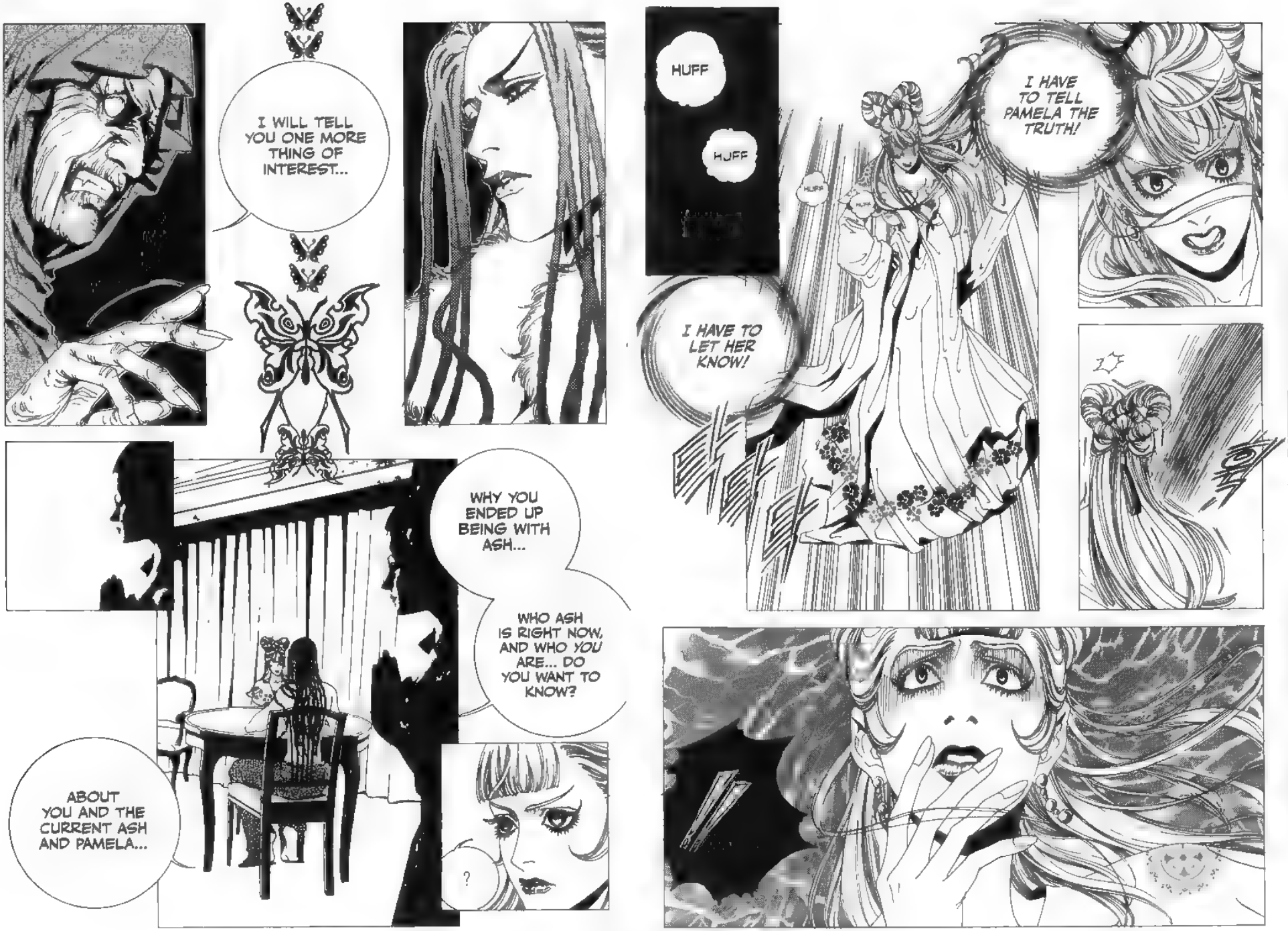
PRICE?
HMM...PERHAPS IT'S NOT TOTALLY CORRECT TO SAY "PRICE."
SINCE PAMELA AND BELIAL'S RELATIONSHIP STARTED BEFORE SHE MET ASH...
?
I GUESS I SHOULD SAY THAT BELIAL AND ASH *EQUALLY* EXCHANGED WHAT THEY NEEDED.

SIMPLY PUT, BELIAL WANTED IMMORTAL PAMELA, AND ASH WANTED DEATH.

BUT DRAGONS, BEING IMMORTAL, LOSE THE ABILITY TO GRANT DEATH THE STRONGER THEY BECOME.

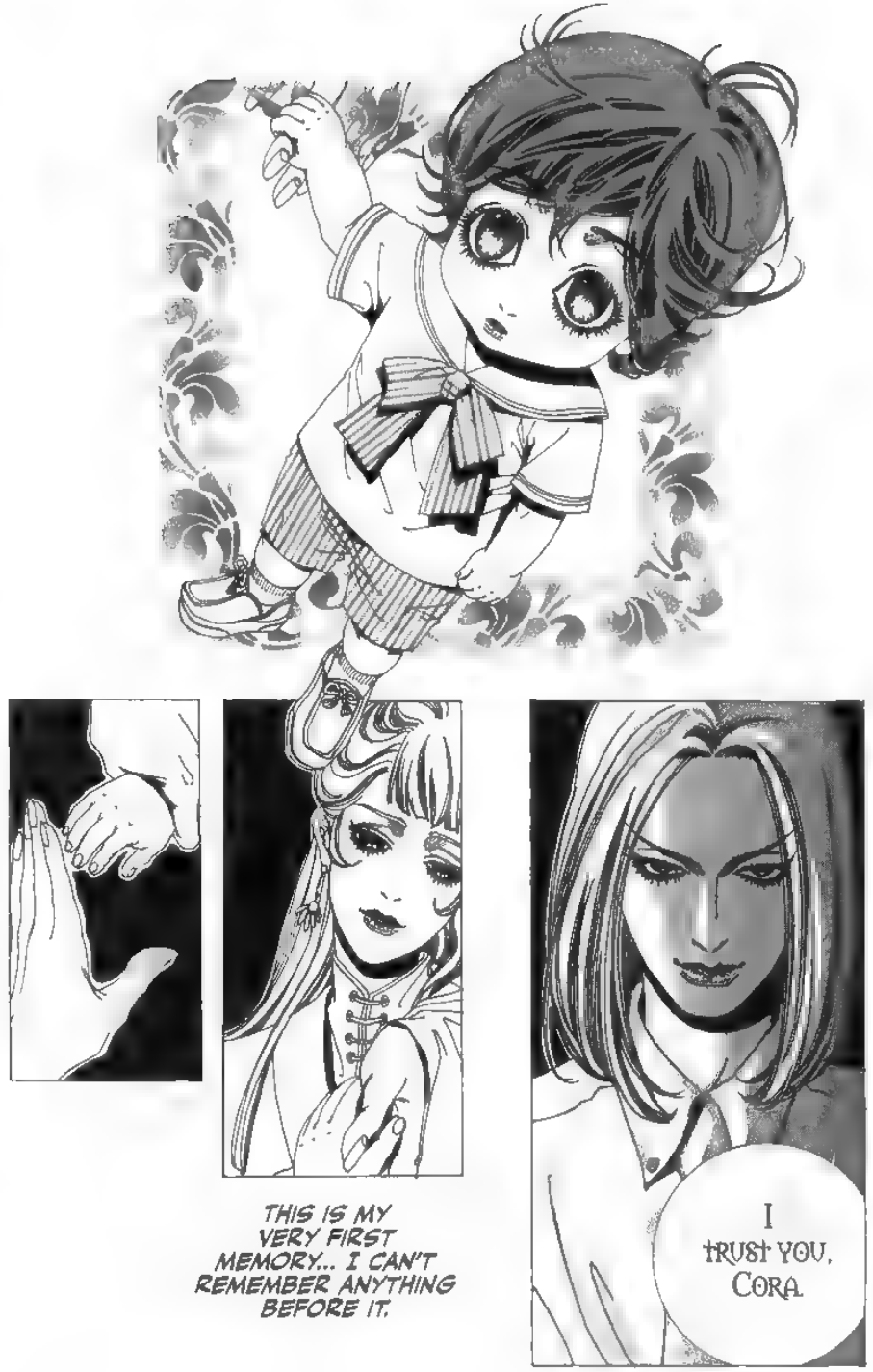
BELIAL WAS ONE OF THE FEW WHO COULD GRANT DEATH.
BELIAL MADE PAMELA IMMORTAL AND ASH WAS ABLE TO ESCAPE THAT FATE.
BELIAL AND ASH HAD THE RIGHT TIMING.
MAYBE IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS, BUT WHY BELIAL AND PAMELA...?
LITTLE CHILD! COME, HAVE SOME BREAD.
YOU'RE NO SAGE. I CAN SEE YOUR TRUE FORM, AND IT'S DIRTY, VILE AND DISTORTED.

EVERY-THING THAT HAPPENED STARTED THERE.
SHE WAS ABLE TO SEE THROUGH TO THE REAL IDENTITY OF BELIAL, AND HE WAS ABLE TO RECOGNIZE HER.
EVERYTHING WAS MEANINGLESS AND BORING FOR BELIAL UNTIL HE MET PAMELA. SHE BECAME HIS ONLY SOURCE OF ENJOYMENT.
PAMELA'S "KEEN INSIGHT," HER GIFT FROM GOD, HAS BECOME THE CAUSE OF AN EXTREMELY FEARFUL WRATH.
IF THAT'S SO, OLD HAG, THEN WHY DID HE MAKE PAMELA IMMORTAL?
BELIAL IS AN IMMORTAL BEING, JUST LIKE ASH.
FOR HIM, THE HUMAN LIFE SPAN IS A MERE MOMENT.
HE WANTED TO ENJOY HER FOREVER.


I WILL TELL YOU ONE MORE THING OF INTEREST...
WHY YOU ENDED UP BEING WITH ASH...
WHO ASH IS RIGHT NOW, AND WHO YOU ARE... DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?
ABOUT YOU AND THE CURRENT ASH AND PAMELA...
?
HUFF
HUFF
I HAVE TO LET HER KNOW!
I HAVE TO TELL PAMELA THE TRUTH!

MEANING OF THE CARD: Transformation. The need to allow something to die in order to create room for the new. Painful change that is necessary. Creating life out of death. Upside down, it represents fear of change. Resisting transformation.

IN MEDIEVAL TIMES...
...IT DIDN'T WORK ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN-- THE GATES OF HELL DIDN'T STAY OPEN. THEY ONLY OPENED EVERY FORTNIGHT.
History of
IT'S AN ENTERTAINING STORY. USEFUL, TOO.
A MONK OF THIS CHURCH, WHO COVETED POWER, ONCE SUMMONED THE DEVIL.


THIS IS MY VERY FIRST MEMORY... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING BEFORE IT.
I trust you, Cora.

I FELT SO EMPTY BECAUSE I COULDN'T GIVE MY LOVE TO ANYONE... IS THAT WHY ASH WAS SO IMPORTANT TO ME?

CORA.
M-MOM.
GASP!
MOM...
MOM...
MOM, DON'T GO. I'M AFRAID. BAD THINGS WILL HAPPEN...

DO YOU WANT TO PROTECT YOUR DAUGHTER?
ALLOW ME TO LEND YOU MY STRENGTH. ACCEPT MY OFFER, OR YOUR DAUGHTER WILL BE BURNED AS A WITCH.
ARE YOU THE DEVIL?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS?
I TAKE IT YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT SIGNING ONE'S LIFE AWAY TO THE DEVIL?
THANK YOU. THINGS WILL BE MUCH MORE ENTER-TAINING NOW...
YOU ARE...
...THE SAGE?!!
WELL, SOME CALL ME THE "EMPEROR OF GREAT WAR," AND OTHERS REFER TO ME AS "THE ONE WHO LOVES EVIL MOST."
BUT I'M DEFINITELY NOT A SAGE. YOUR DAUGHTER WAS RIGHT.

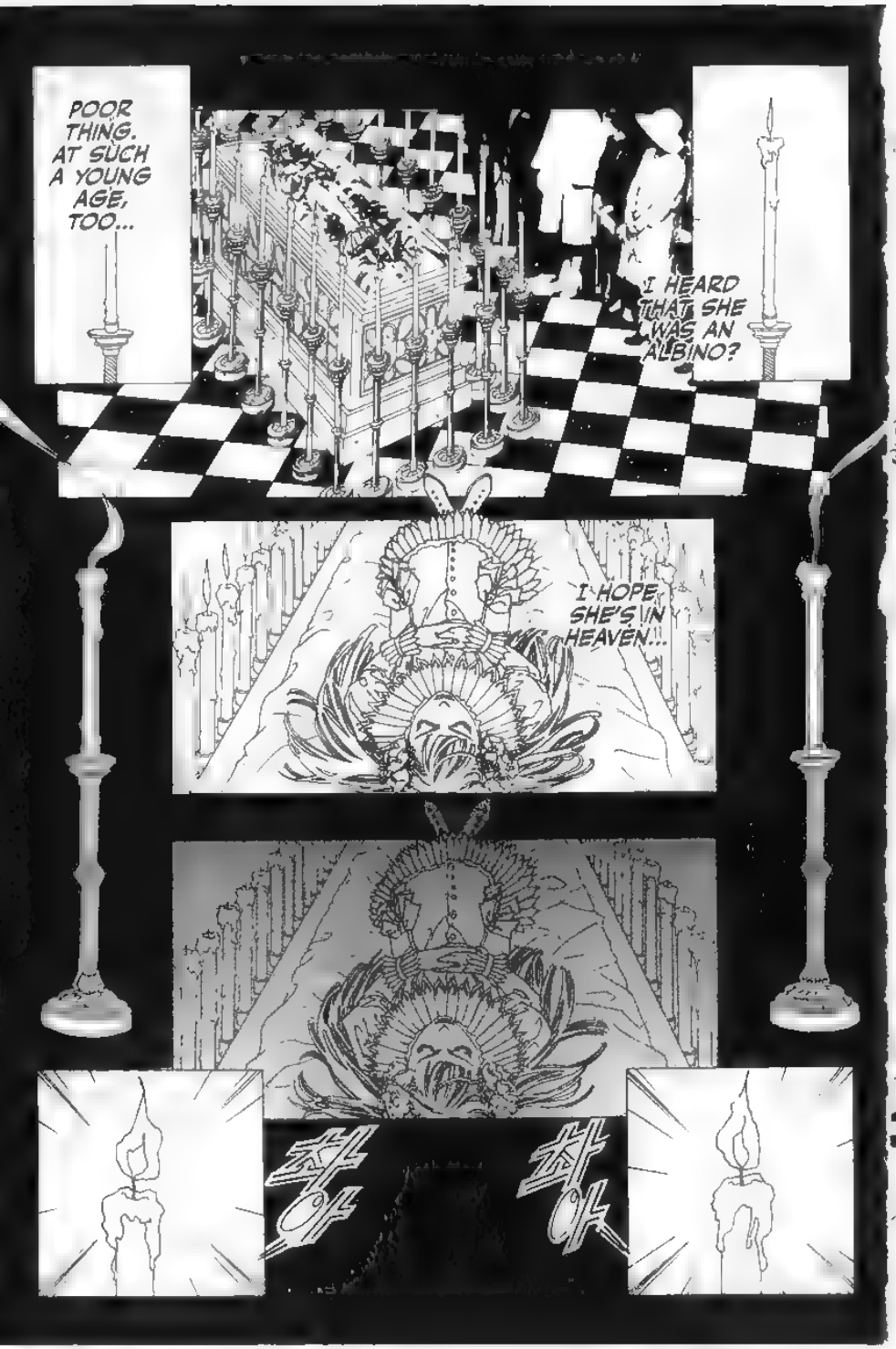
ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE DISASTROUS FOR PAMELA TO HAVE THE KEEN INSIGHT THAT SHE HAS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN *DISASTROUS?* THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU PROMISED!
I PROMISED THAT SHE WOULDN'T BE BURNED AT THE STAKE. I NEVER SAID I WOULDN'T TOUCH HER.
NO! LEAVE MY DAUGHTER ALONE!
I CAN'T DO THAT.

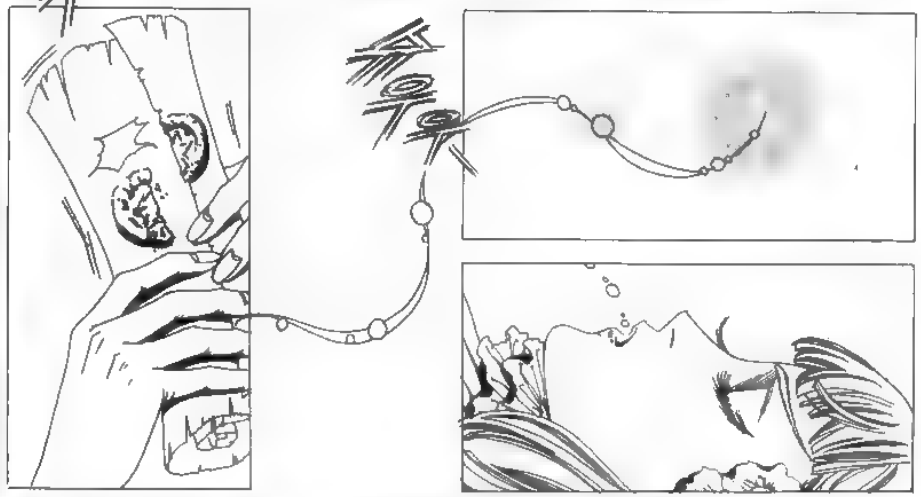
PLEASE... DON'T HARM MY DAUGHTER!
SHE IS!
BEEP
BEEP

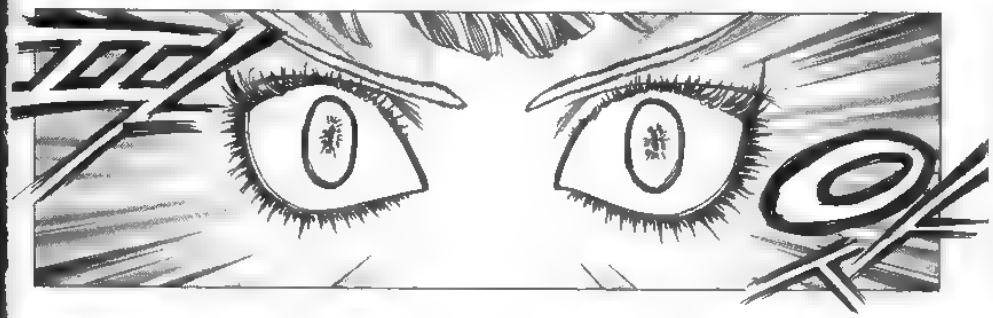
DAMN IT! I LIKED THIS BODY, AND NOW IT'S RUINED.
DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD DESTROY ME THIS WAY?
A MOTHER'S LOVE IS VOID OF REASON-- IT'S PURE EMOTION.

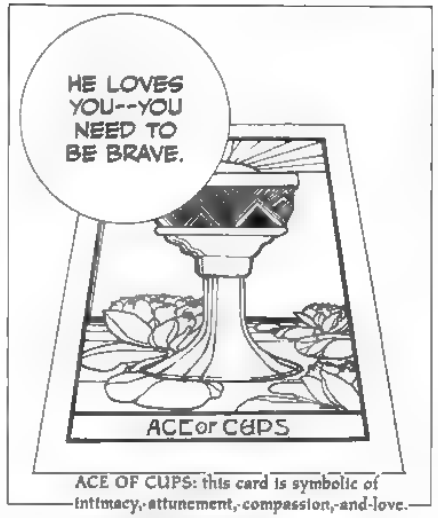
I'LL BE SEEING YOU AGAIN.
HAH, HAH, HAH
YAY!
HOORAY!
THE DAY IS FINALLY HERE...

...?
DON'T YOU LAY YOUR HANDS ON MY DAUGHTER!
I HOPE EVERYTHING LOOKS OKAY...
SINCE YOU DESTROYED MY BODY... I HAD TO GET A NEW ONE.
YOU'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.
HAH, HAH HAH...
HAH HAH
HAH, HAH, HAH...
HAH, HAH, HAH...
HAH, HAH, HAH...
HAH, HAH, HAH!!

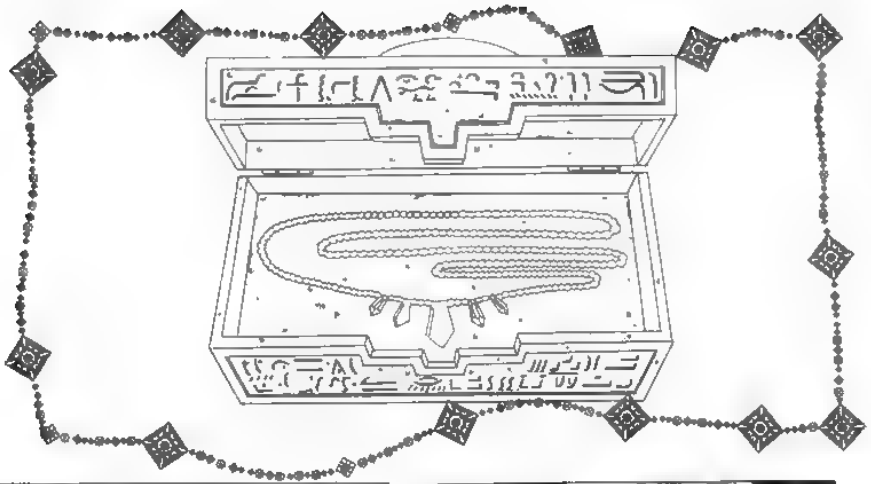

POOR THING. AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE, TOO...
I HEARD THAT SHE WAS AN ALBINO?
I HOPE SHE'S IN HEAVEN...!!





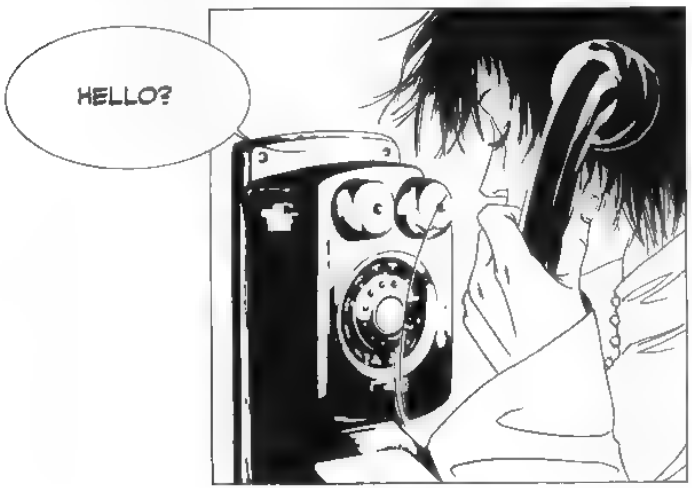


ACE OF CUPS: this card is symbolic of intimacy, attunement, compassion, and love.

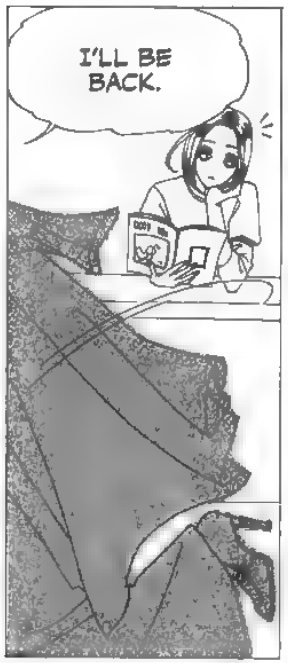


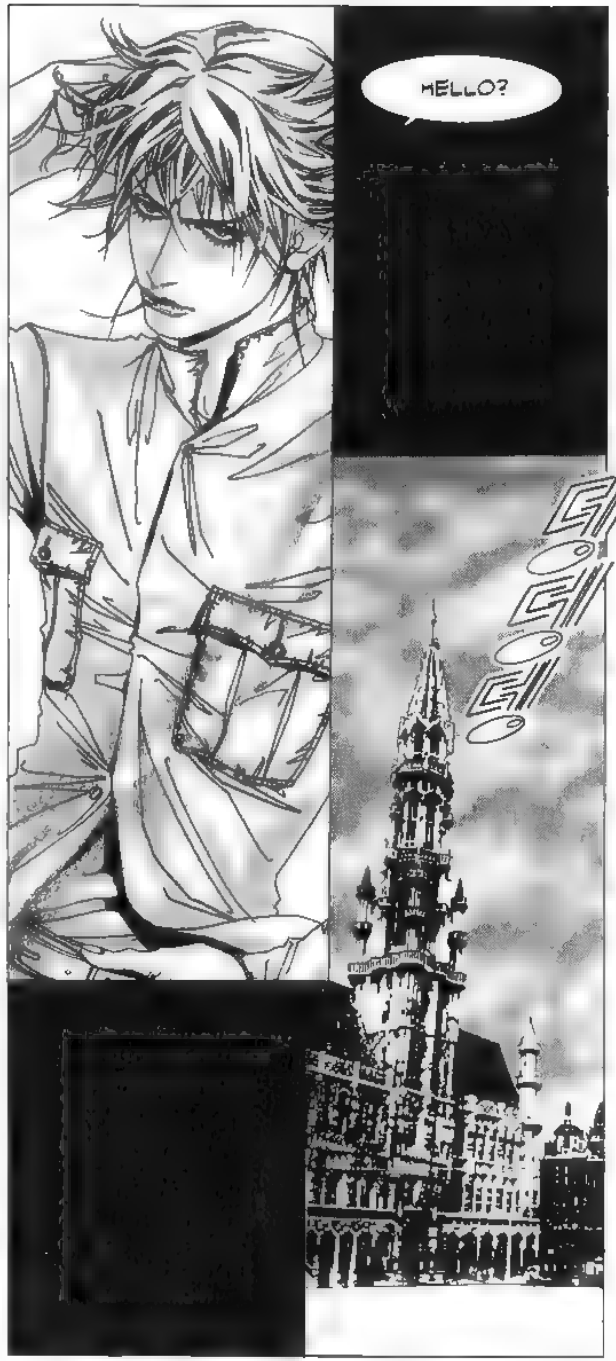
THE BOX KEEPS FILLING UP. TOO BAD...

PAMELA, GET THE PHONE.


HELLO?

WHERE ARE YOU?


I'LL BE BACK.


HELLO?
GI GI GI GI

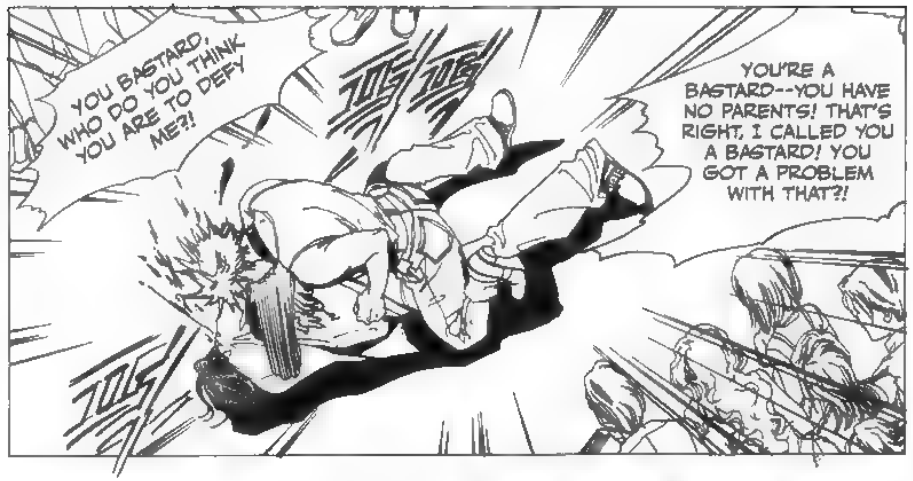
THE SKY IS GREY. LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO RAIN, NO?

ASH...? I THOUGHT YOU WERE HURT AND COULDN'T MOVE!
OR...
DO YOU LOVE ME, PAMELA?
SILLY WOMAN...
DO YOU BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR?
IF...IF YOU'RE JOKING, I'M GONNA KILL YOU! I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
I HEAR THAT YOU'RE IMMORTAL.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
WHAT A PAIN. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DISPOSE OF YOU IF YOU CAN'T DIE?
I'M SAYING THAT I LOATHE YOU, PAMELA.
WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CHURCH WHEN WE FIRST MET? WHAT HAPPENED IN SCOTLAND? I MADE ALL THOSE THINGS HAPPEN ON PURPOSE.
WHAT?! WHY?

BECAUSE YOU TOOK AWAY THE MOST PRECIOUS PERSON IN MY LIFE.
I DIDN'T HAVE A NORMAL LIFE.
I DIDN'T HAVE A MOTHER OR A FATHER.
THE WAY I CAME TO EXIST IN THIS WORLD WAS DIFFERENT FROM EVERY OTHER KID...IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME.
HELLO?

TO ME, BELUS WAS A FATHER, A FRIEND, AND A TEACHER.
I DON'T KNOW WHY HE CHOSE TO BE IN MY LIFE.
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITH ME.


YOU BASTARD, WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TO DEFY ME?!
YOU'RE A BASTARD--YOU HAVE NO PARENTS! THAT'S RIGHT, I CALLED YOU A BASTARD! YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?!

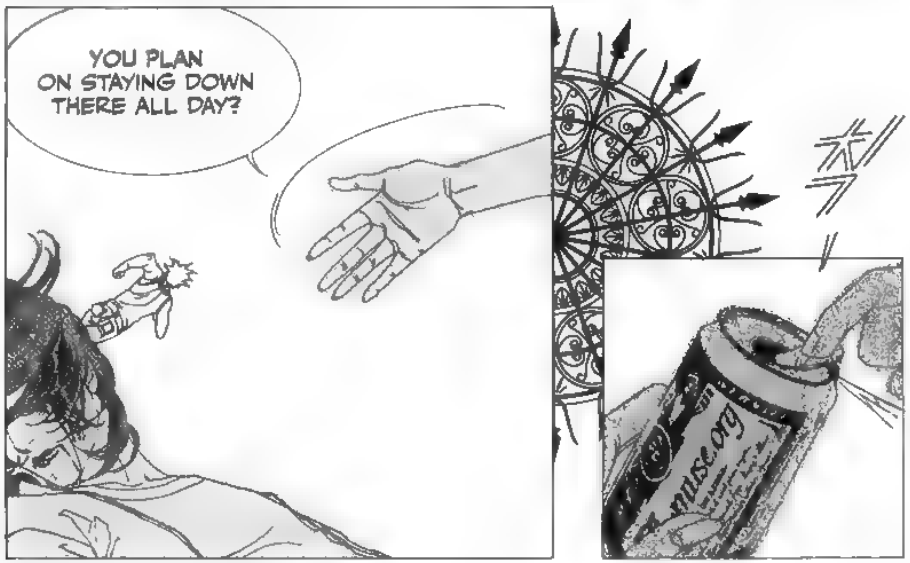
YOU LITTLE BASTARD!

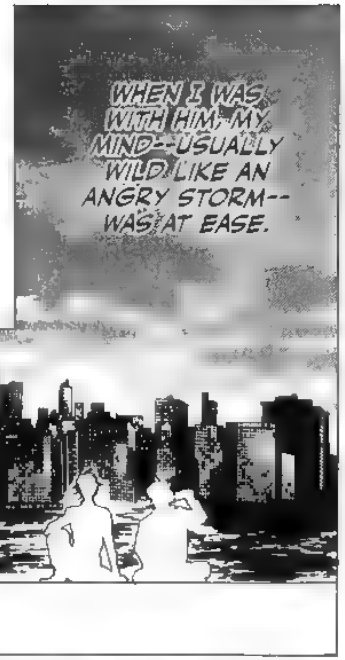
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

IF ASH IS A BASTARD, WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU?
I HEARD THAT YOU WERE BORN AFTER YOUR MOM HAD AN AFFAIR WITH SOME GROCERY CLERK NAMED DAVID.

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!!

IF YOU THINK I'M LYING, GO HOME. SEE FOR YOUR OWN EYES WHAT YOUR MOM AND DAVID ARE UP TO!


YOU PLAN ON STAYING DOWN THERE ALL DAY?


WHEN I WAS WITH HIM, MY MIND--USUALLY WILD LIKE AN ANGRY STORM--WAS AT EASE.

BUT ONE DAY...

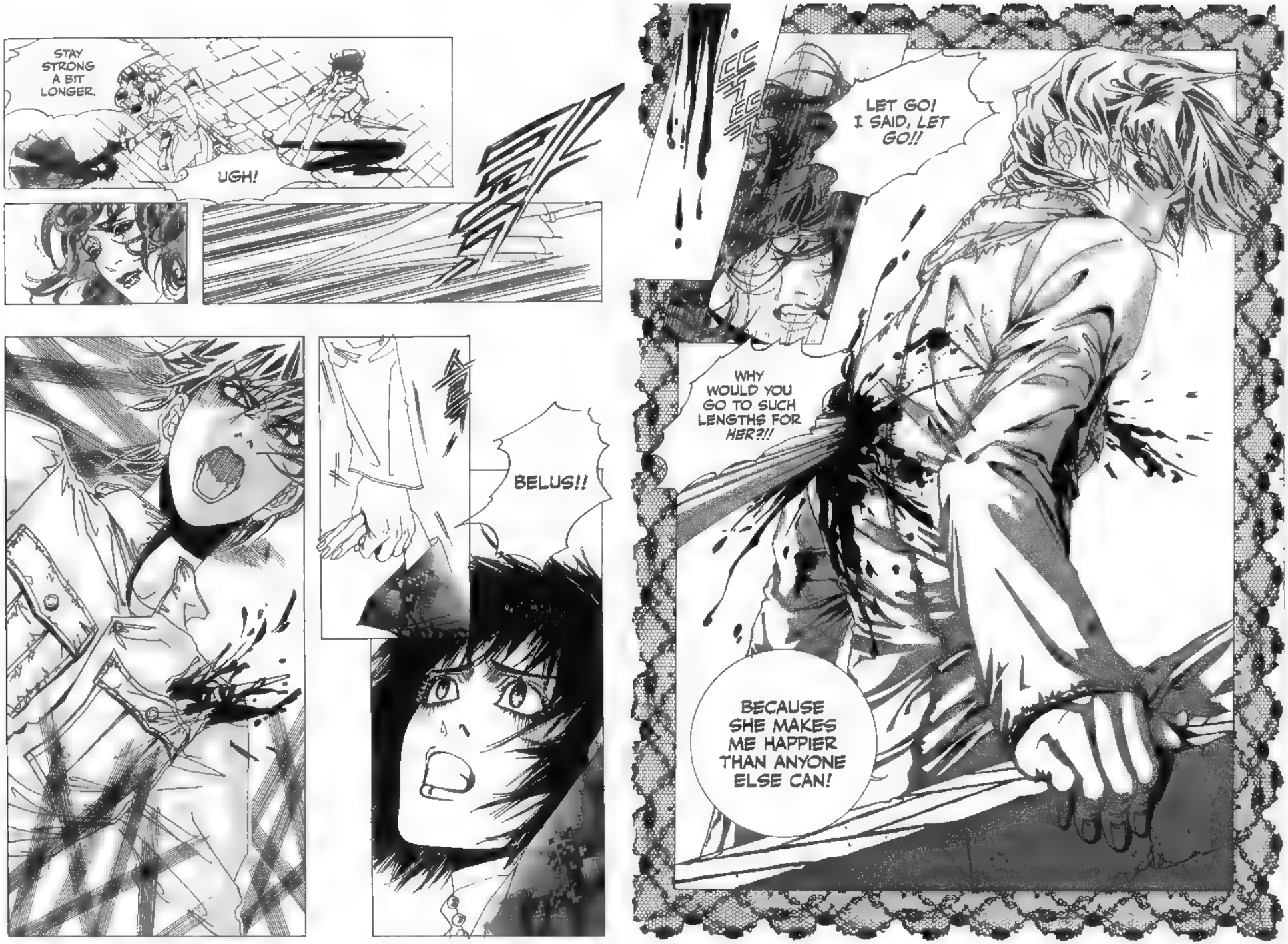
I THINK I HAVE TO GO BACK TO HER NOW.

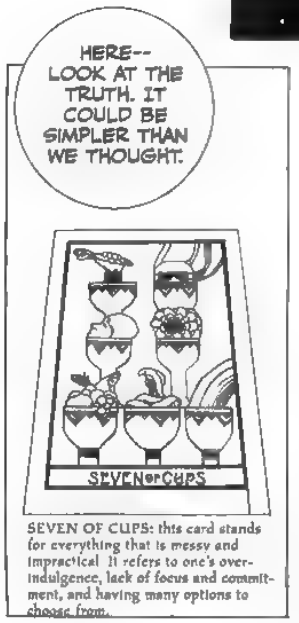
THERE IS A WOMAN THAT BRINGS ME MUCH HAPPINESS.
AND I...
Dear Ash
Good Bye
...WAS THROWN AWAY...
JUST LIKE A USED TISSUE.
THAT'S WHY I HAD TO FIND YOU.
I HAD TO SEE WHAT KIND OF A WOMAN WOULD MAKE HIM THROW ME ASIDE LIKE THAT.

ASH...?
AHH!!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!! I CAN'T DIE-- NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO TO ME!
I KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU TO COME HERE. LOOK DOWN.
WHAT'S THAT...?

THAT'S A DOOR THAT WAS OPENED WHEN A PRIEST ONCE SUMMONED THE DEVIL. IT HAPPENED IN THE MIDDLE AGES...
HIS SUMMONING MAGIC WASN'T PERFECT, SO EVERY 15 DAYS, THE DOOR OPENED. NOTHING'S CHANGED SINCE THEN... THIS IS THE DOOR TO HELL!!
TIME TO GO, PAMELA.
AAAH!

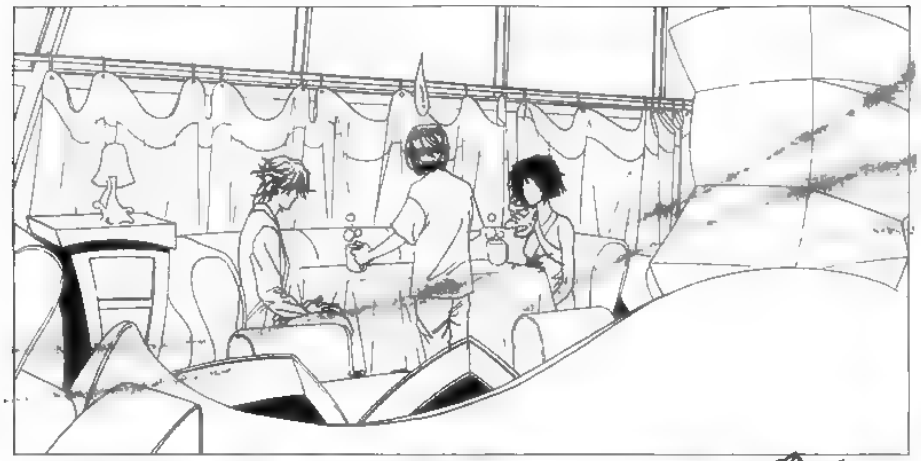
I FOLLOWED PAMELA BECAUSE I FELT THAT SOMETHING WAS STRANGE. APPARENTLY, YOU WERE CREATING A SCENE, ASH.
AAAH!
LET HER GO, BELUS.


STAY STRONG A BIT LONGER.
UGH!
LET GO! I SAID, LET GO!!
WHY WOULD YOU GO TO SUCH LENGTHS FOR HER?!!
BECAUSE SHE MAKES ME HAPPIER THAN ANYONE ELSE CAN!
BELUS!!

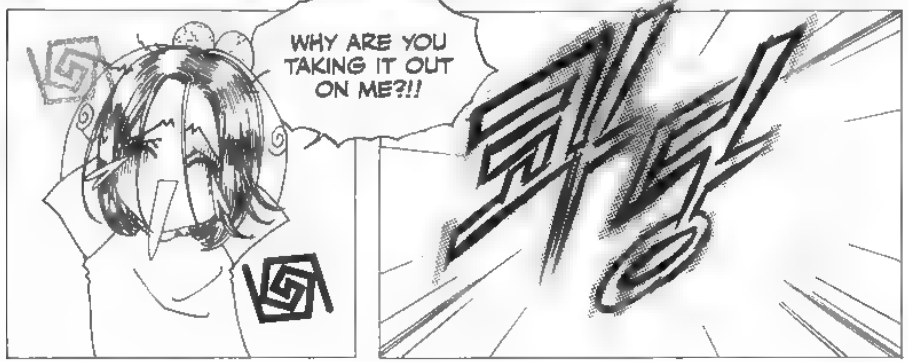


SEVEN OF CUPS: this card stands for everything that is messy and impractical. It refers to one's over-indulgence, lack of focus and commitment, and having many options to choose from.

THINK OF IT FROM A RATIONAL STANDPOINT...
THE HIEROPHANT: this card is symbolic of the need to conform to previously defined rules and situations. It refers to one's pursuance of knowledge, being part of a group, and sharing a cultural heritage.
THE JANI
SENSITIVITY WILL ONLY BE POISON...

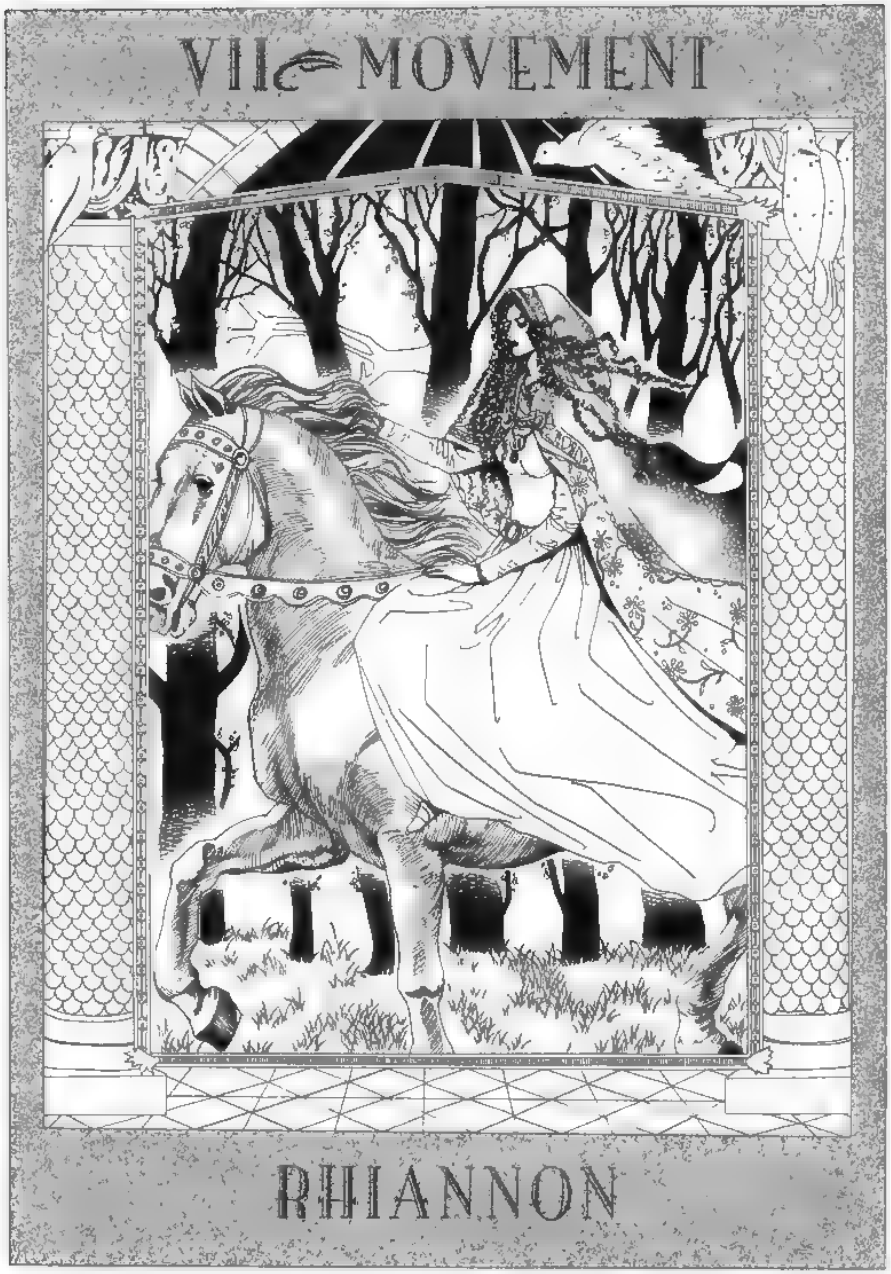


IT'S A BIT AWKWARD AROUND HERE TODAY.
IT'S LIKE TWO PEOPLE ON A BLIND DATE.

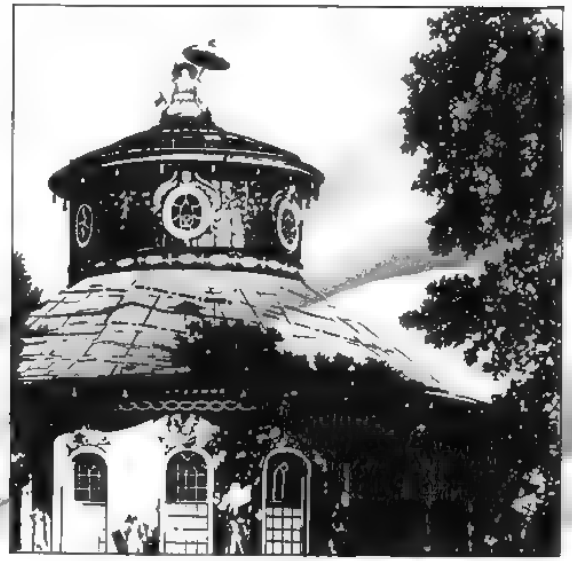

WHY ARE YOU TAKING IT OUT ON ME?!!

ARE YOU OKAY?!! WE'D BETTER GET YOU TO THE HOSPITAL...
MY POOR PAMELA...
GO FIND ALECTO!!
HE WILL TELL YOU THE TRUTH... THE TRUTH...

M...MOM?
SHE PASSED AWAY LONG AGO, DIDN'T SHE?
THE VOICE WAS DIFFER-ENT...
...AND SHE LOOKED DIFFER-ENT...
...BUT IT WAS CLEARLY MY MOTHER.
SOMETHING IS INSIDE THERE!!



MEANING OF THE CARD: Life passes onto another season, career improvement, good timing, the change will happen smoothly



YOU ARE THE ONE WHO MADE ALL THAT COMMOTION IN PAMELA'S STORE. WHY ARE YOU HERE?

BELIAL MUST HAVE ERASED IT...

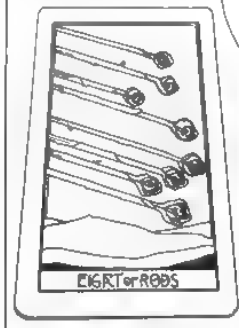
WHO...? ERASED WHAT?

YOUR MEMORY.

YOU ARE BELIAL'S PLAYTHING, ASH.

OR SHOULD I CALL YOU, "FAKE ASH"?

EIGHT OF RODS. this card signifies that now is the time for action. It refers to one discovering the truth, moving into high gear and experiencing a grand finale.



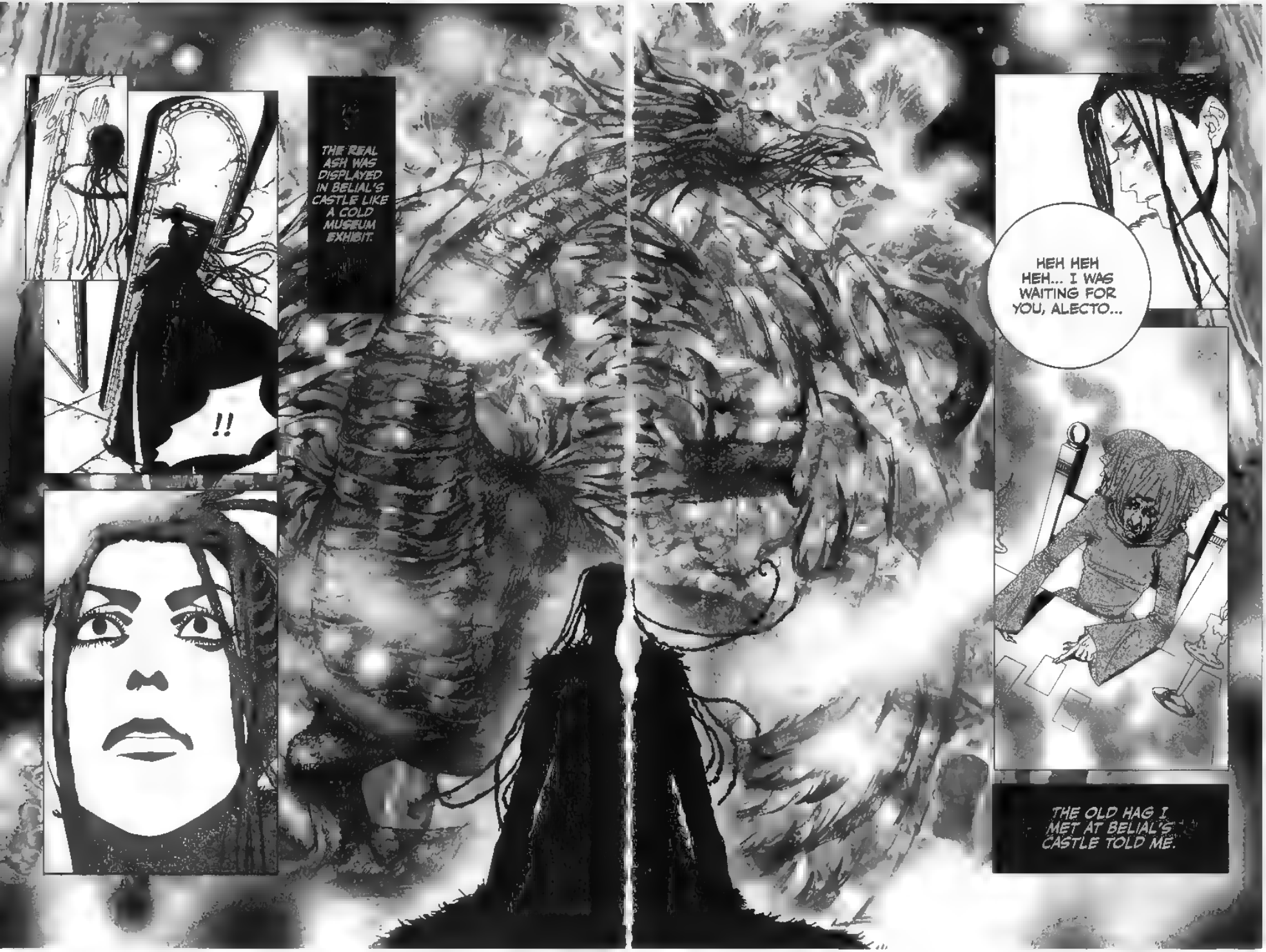
I WILL BE ABLE TO FIND SOMETHING THAT I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR...?

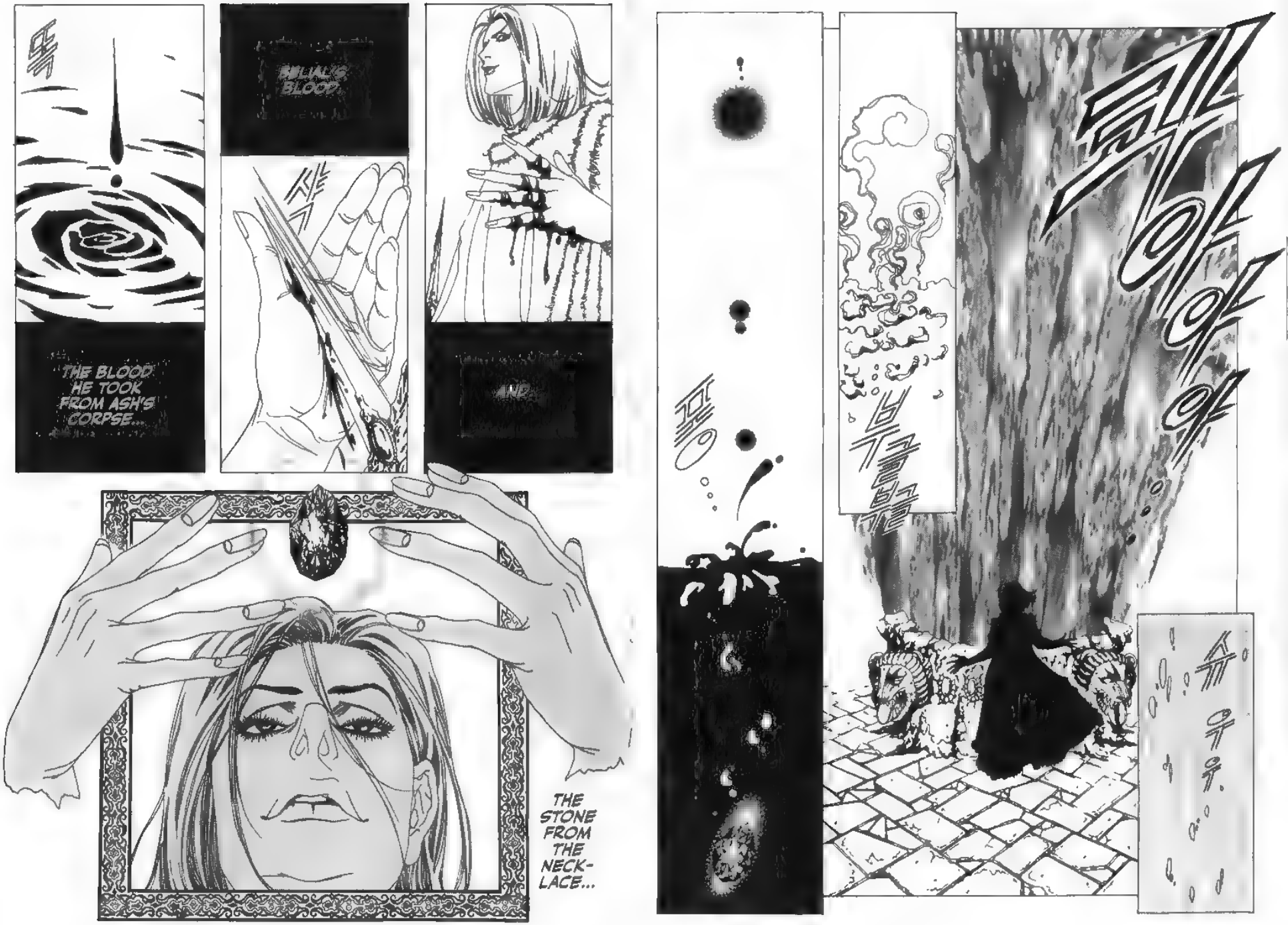
NINE OF RODS this card s grifies a warning to proceed carefully, but to never give up, no matter what It refers to one persevering, demonstrating physical strength and taking extra precautions.

A TRAP....

THE APPEARANCE OF YOUR MOTHER-- WHO DIED LONG AGO...
...ISN'T THAT A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS? COULDN'T YOU AT LEAST CONSIDER NOT GOING?
WE MUST OVERCOME DANGER SOMETIMES IN ORDER TO MAKE PROGRESS.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO GO?
I'D HAVE TO BE STUPID NOT TO.
I DON'T LIKE IT HERE. I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING BAD IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN.
I'LL LOOK HERE; YOU SEARCH OVER THAT WAY.
I'M...NOT HUMAN?!!

I'M...
THAT'S ASH'S VOICE.
HAVEN'T YOU EVER THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE?
...A DOLL? I WAS MADE BY SOMEONE?
YOU DON'T HAVE PARENTS, YOU HAVE A POWER THAT NORMAL HUMANS CAN'T UNDERSTAND, AND ALL THE STRANGE THINGS HAPPENING AROUND YOU...
THEN WHAT THE HELL AM I?!!
YOU ARE THE MAIN STONE OF BELIAL'S NECKLACE... YOU ARE A HUMAN BEING THAT WAS MADE FROM A GEMSTONE.
A GEM-STONE?
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN HAPPY FOR A WHILE, PAMELA?
BUT THIS ONE IS MERELY A GEM. HE'S NOT REALLY ASH.


!!
THE REAL ASH WAS DISPLAYED IN BELIAL'S CASTLE LIKE A COLD MUSEUM EXHIBIT.
HEH HEH HEH... I WAS WAITING FOR YOU, ALECTO...
THE OLD HAG I MET AT BELIAL'S CASTLE TOLD ME.


THE BLOOD HE TOOK FROM ASH'S CORPSE...
AND
THE STONE FROM THE NECK-LACE...

NO...
NO!!
NO!!

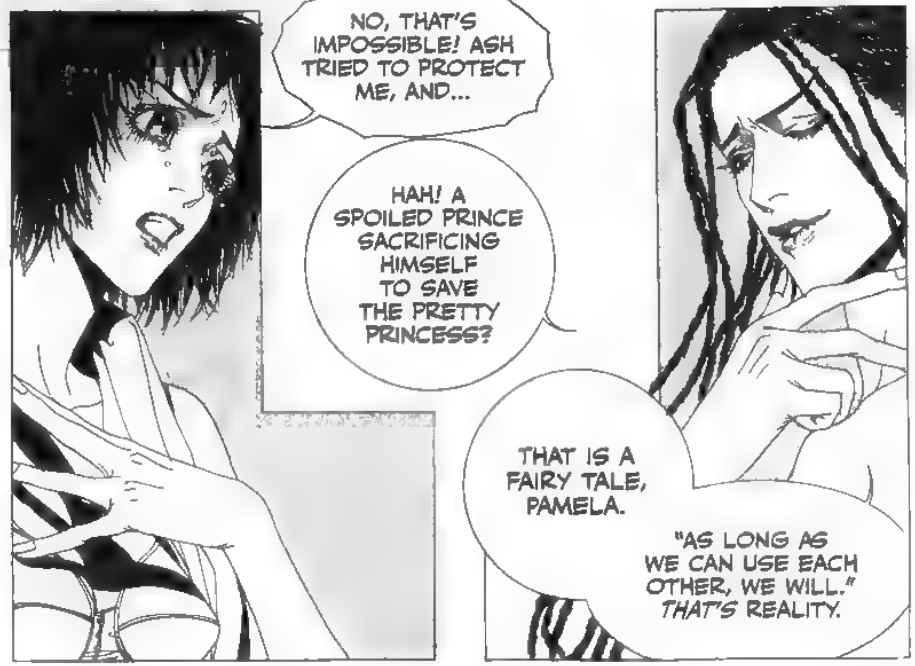
CORA...YOUR MOTHER--DID YOU MEET HER?
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY YOU CAME HERE.
HOW IS SHE?

OBVIOUSLY... BELIAL DID NOT LET HER BE.

I WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH, ALECTO.
ABOUT THE GAME YOU WERE SWEPT AWAY IN?
OR... ABOUT ASH?
THE TRUTH? THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT?

BOTH.
FINE. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT ASH FIRST.
ASH KNEW YOU HAD BECOME BELIAL'S TOY WITH AN IMMORTAL BODY.
WHAT?
NOT ONLY THAT, HE MADE A DEAL WITH BELIAL. ABOUT YOU, OF COURSE.
!!!

SHOULD I JUST FILL YOU IN?
IN ORDER TO GET RID OF HIS IMMORTAL BODY, ASH MADE A DEAL WITH BELIAL.

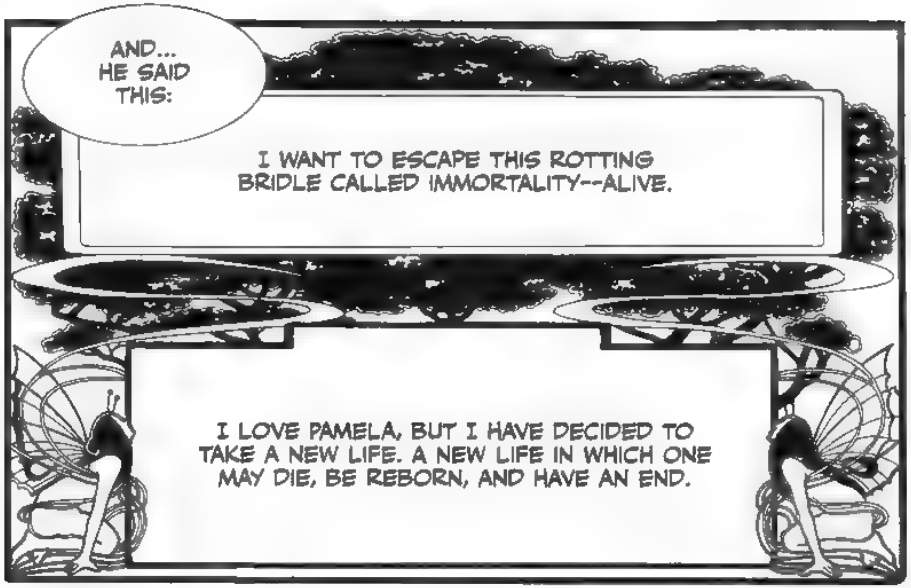

NO, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! ASH TRIED TO PROTECT ME, AND...
HAH! A SPOILED PRINCE SACRIFICING HIMSELF TO SAVE THE PRETTY PRINCESS?
THAT IS A FAIRY TALE, PAMELA.
"AS LONG AS WE CAN USE EACH OTHER, WE WILL." THAT'S REALITY.

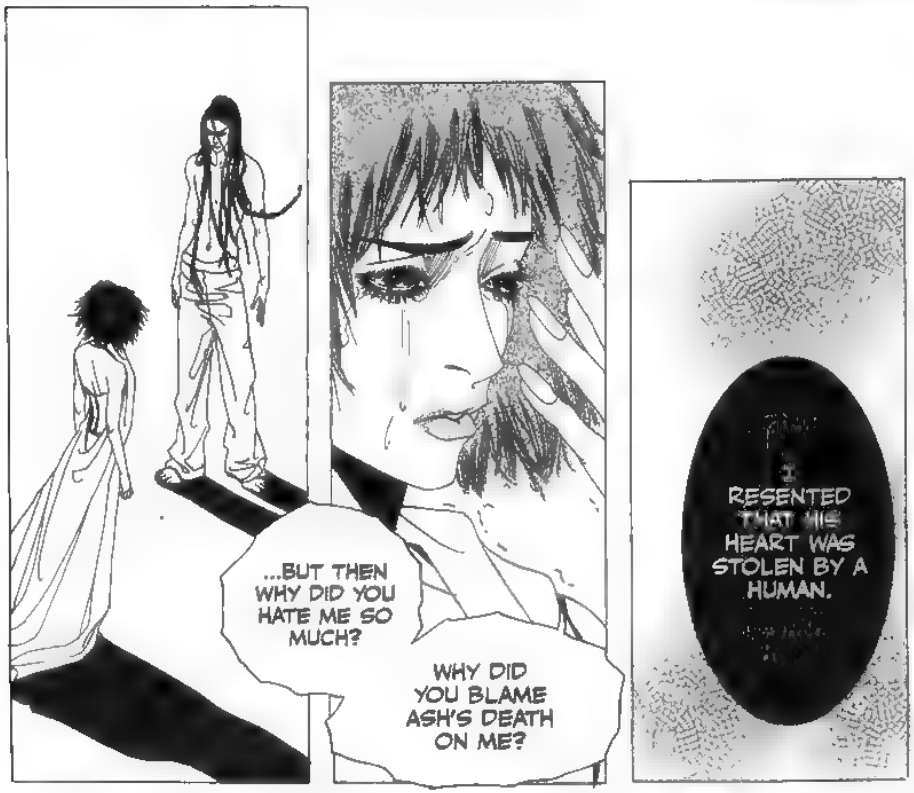
MY HEART HAS LIVED SO LONG, IT HAS BECOME LIKE A ROCK.
PAMELA, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO LOVE YOU MORE THAN I LOVE MYSELF.
SOBBING

SADLY, I WAS NOT THE PROTAGONIST IN THIS DRAMA OF FATE. I WAG ONLY A SUPPORTING CHARACTER THAT STOLE GLANCES AT THE LEADING MAN.

THE NIGHT BEFORE ASH DIED, I SAW SOMETHING I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE...

I WILL ACCEPT YOUR CONDITION.
YOU ARE.. THE COLDEST MAN OF ANYONE I KNOW, ASH.
HAVE YOU EVEN THOUGHT OF PAMELA? SHE CANNOT DIE, AND SHE IS MISERABLE BECAUSE OF YOU.
PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL KEEP THE SECRET.
A PROMISE WITH THE DEVIL. HO HO.. YES, I PROMISE.
I'M CURIOUS ABOUT ONE THING, THOUGH DO YOU LOVE HER?
YES, I LOVE PAMELA.
BUT I LOVE MYSELF MORE.
NO!!
NO!!
NO!!


AND... HE SAID THIS:
I WANT TO ESCAPE THIS ROTTING BRIDLE CALLED IMMORTALITY--ALIVE.
I LOVE PAMELA, BUT I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE A NEW LIFE. A NEW LIFE IN WHICH ONE MAY DIE, BE REBORN, AND HAVE AN END.

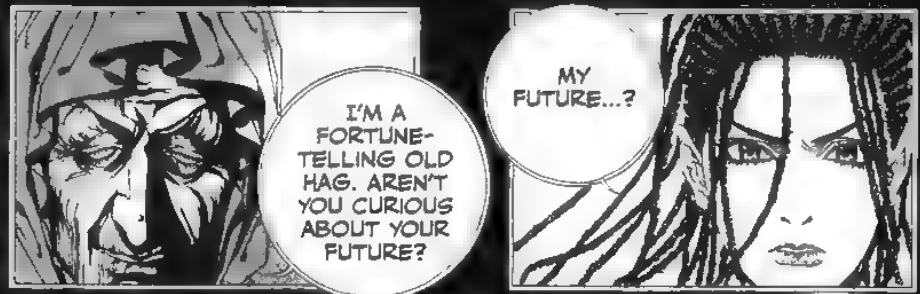

...BUT THEN WHY DID YOU HATE ME SO MUCH?
WHY DID YOU BLAME ASH'S DEATH ON ME?
I RESENTED THAT HIS HEART WAS STOLEN BY A HUMAN.

I DON'T KNOW WHEN I WAS WANDERING THROUGH THE FOREST, OR WHY. I DON'T REMEMBER THINGS VERY WELL.

HEH, HEH, HEH... WELCOME. I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

WHO ARE YOU?!!

I AM AN OLD HAG WITH THREE FACES...
YES. I MET HER AGAIN IN BELIAL'S CASTLE.


I'M A FORTUNE-TELLING OLD HAG. AREN'T YOU CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE?
MY FUTURE...?

THIS CARD REFLECTS THE PRESENT.
IT REFERS TO ONE WHO RULES HIS EMOTIONS COMPLETELY.
YOU ARE THE CHOSEN ONE WHO WILL RULE THE WORLD SOMEDAY...
THE EMPEROR this card represents an encounter with authority, or the assumption of power or control. It signifies the offering of explanations, applying reason to chaos, and establishing law and order.
V
THE EMPEROR

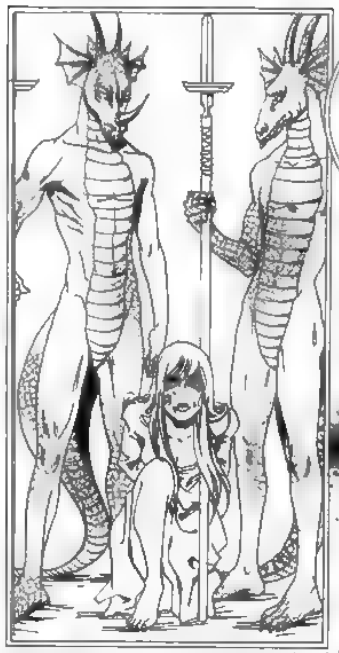
THIS CARD REFLECTS THE NEAR FUTURE.
I SEE DESTRUCTION. THE TOWER THAT YOU HAVE BUILT WILL BE TOPPLED IN AN INSTANT BECAUSE OF SOMEONE.
THE TOWER· this card signifies quick and explosive change. It refers to experiencing an upheaval and an eruption of anger, followed by being humbled and a sudden realization of the truth.
XVI
THE TOV

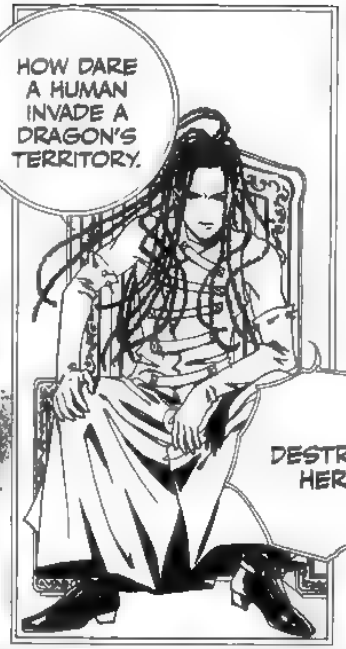
WHO DARES TO ATTEMPT TO TOPPLE ME?

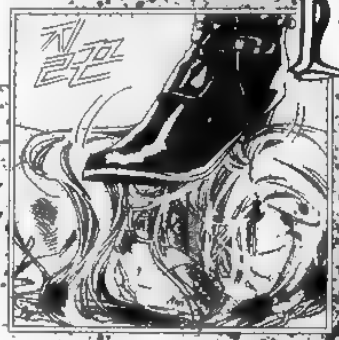
A HUMAN--
A WOMAN.
HAH! THE EMPEROR OF DRAGONS WILL BE TOPPLED BY A HUMAN WOMAN?!
HEH HEH HEH...LET'S LOOK AT THE LAST CARD.
THREE OF SWORDS.
This card symbolizes sudden pain as if someone has driven a sharp object through one's heart. It refers to heartbreak, loneliness, and the discovery of a betrayal
THIS CARD REFLECTS THE FAR FUTURE.
A WOUNDED HEART...HEH HEH HEH.
THREE OF SWORDS
And upheaval and an eruption of anger followed by being humbled
HOW DARE YOU SAY SUCH A THING!!
POOR THING.
IT IS YOUR FATE TO HAVE UNREQUITED LOVE FOR A HUMAN FEMALE AND THEN DISAPPEAR LIKE DUST.
HEH, HEH, HEH... BEWARE...
FOR WHEN YOU FALL IN LOVE, DEATH WILL TAKE YOU.

YOU WICKED OLD HAG!!

HEH, HEH, HEH...




HOW DARE A HUMAN INVADE A DRAGON'S TERRITORY.
DESTROY HER!



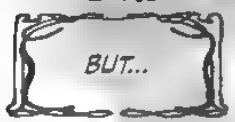
IN ORDER TO AVOID THE OLD HAG'S PROPHECY, FROM THAT DAY ON, I KILLED EVERY HUMAN THAT CAME INTO MY TERRITORY

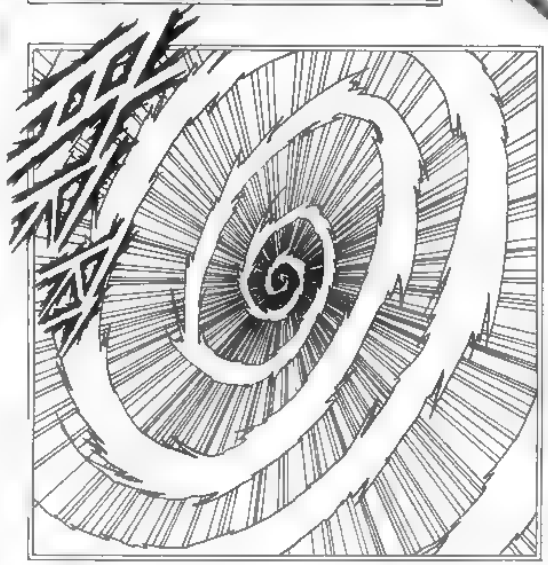
IN ORDER TO RESIST THE MONSTER OF FATE, I MYSELF BECAME A MONSTER.

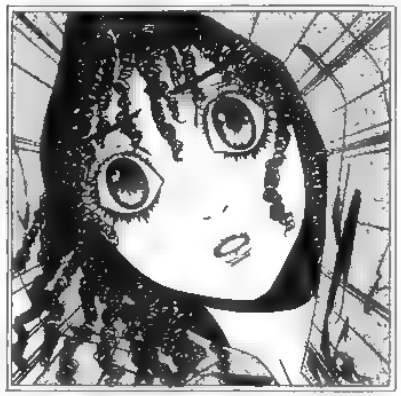
WHY IS A HUMAN WANDERING AROUND HERE?

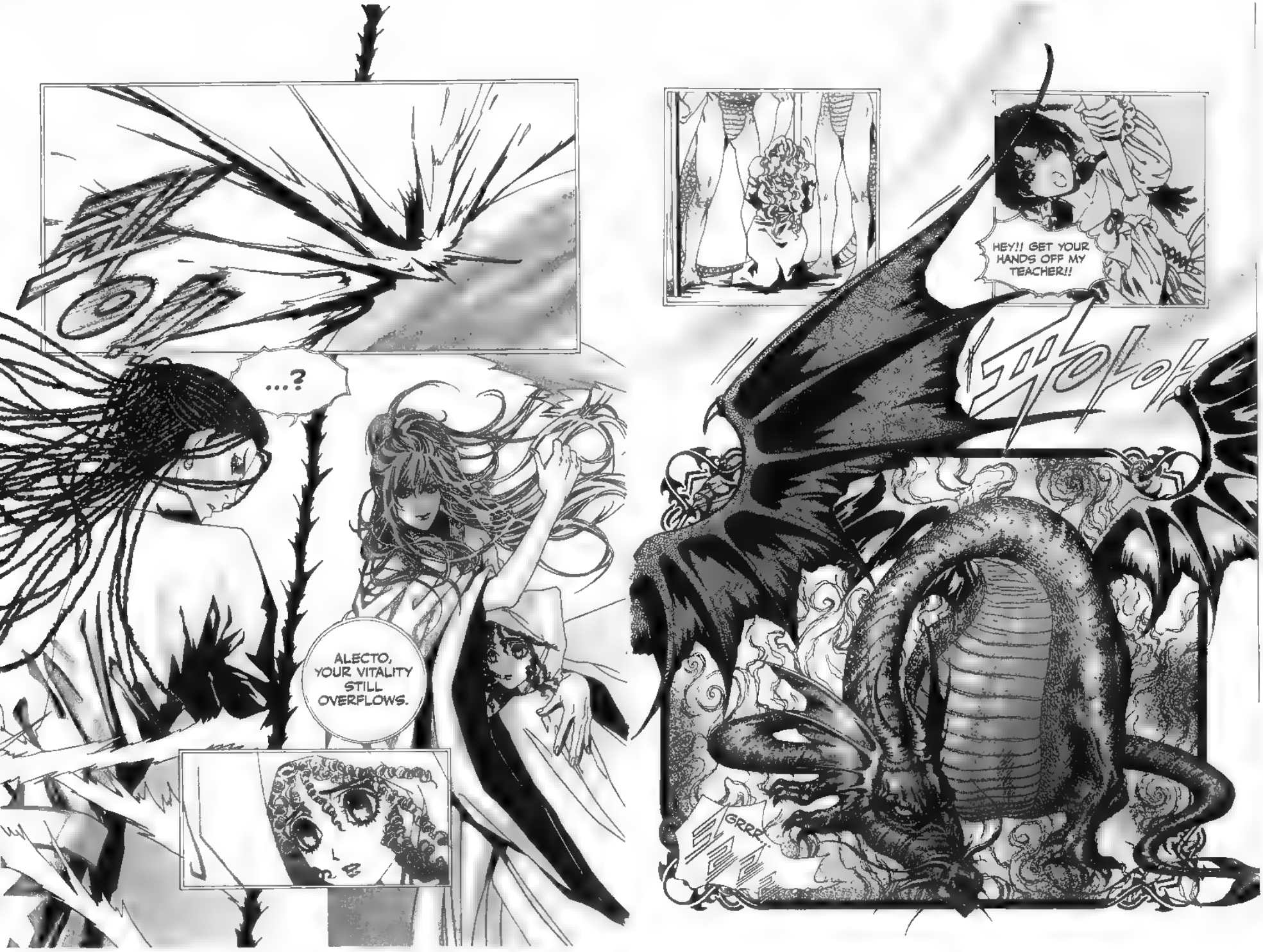
IT IS YOUR FATE TO HAVE UNREQUITED LOVE FOR A HUMAN FEMALE AND THEN DISAPPEAR LIKE DUST.

HUMANS ARE CREATURES OF ILL OMEN! ALL OF THEM IN MY TERRITORY MUST DIE!

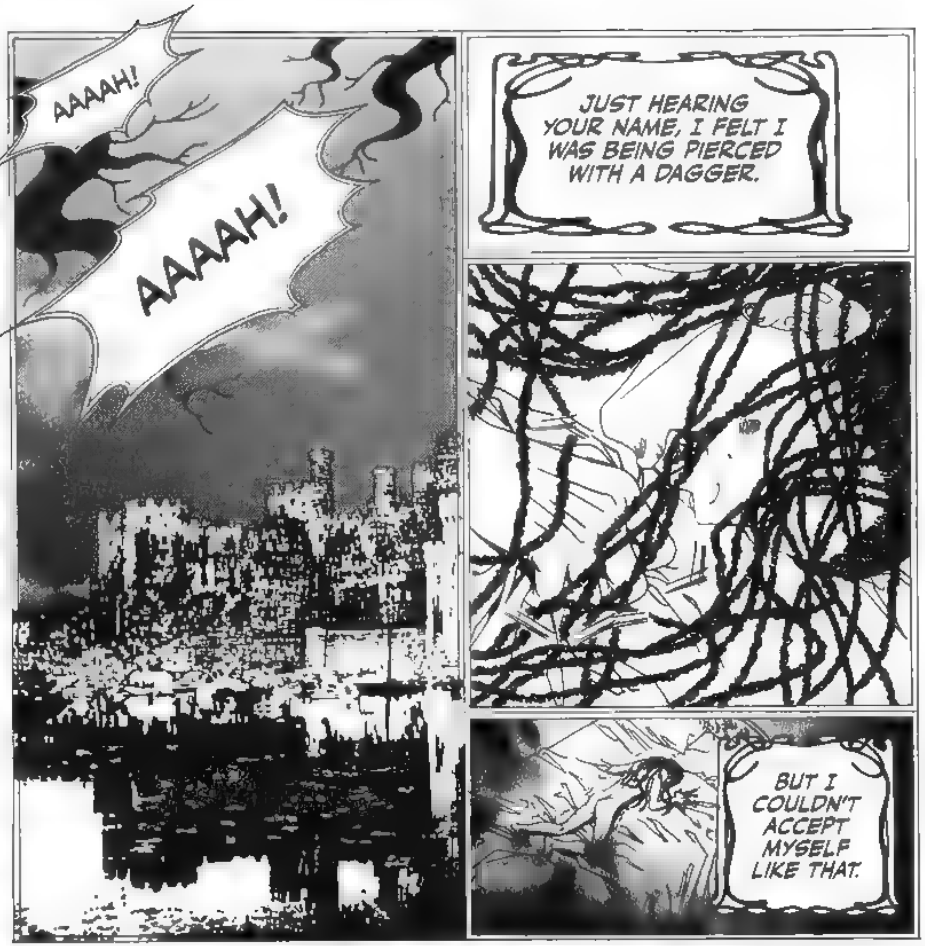

BUT...






...?
ALECTO, YOUR VITALITY STILL OVERFLOWS.
HEY!! GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY TEACHER!!
GRRR...

HEY, CREEP!
LET ASH GO!
FATHER
YES
YES


AAAAH!
AAAAH!
JUST HEARING YOUR NAME, I FELT I WAS BEING PIERCED WITH A DAGGER.
BUT I COULDN'T ACCEPT MYSELF LIKE THAT.

YOU PROBABLY DON'T CARE BECAUSE YOU'RE SO PITIFUL, BUT JUST REMEMBER-- YOU HAVE NO FUTURE.
A HUMAN AND A DRAGON? THAT'S NOT EVEN FUNNY.

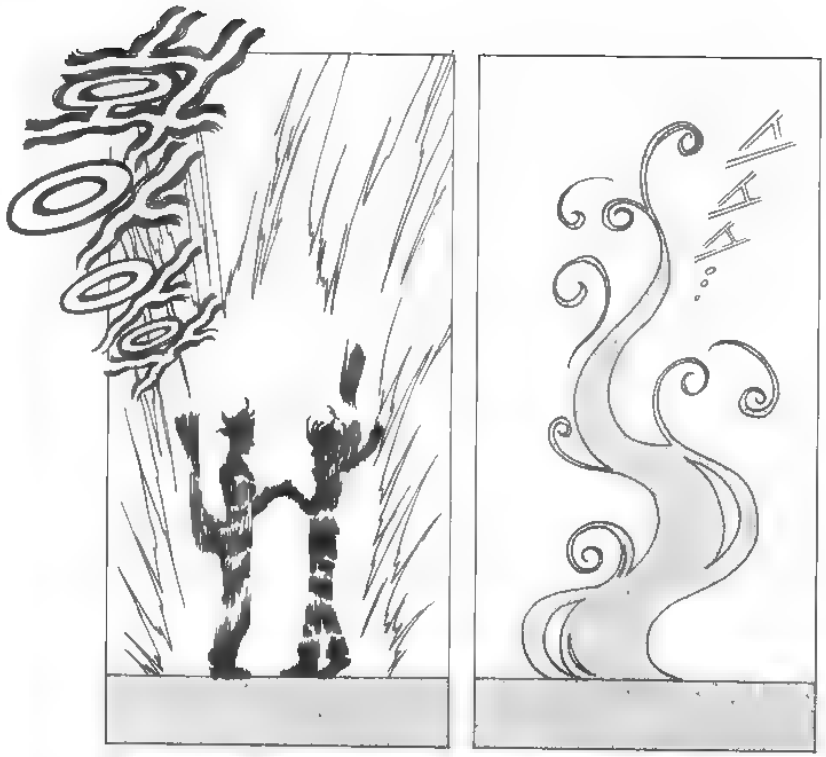
THAT WAS ACTUALLY SOMETHING I WAS TELLING MYSELF, NOT ASH.
I COULDN'T REVEAL SUCH GUILT AND ENVY TO MY MOST PRECIOUS FRIEND...
NOR THE LOVE AND HATE THAT I HAD FOR YOU.

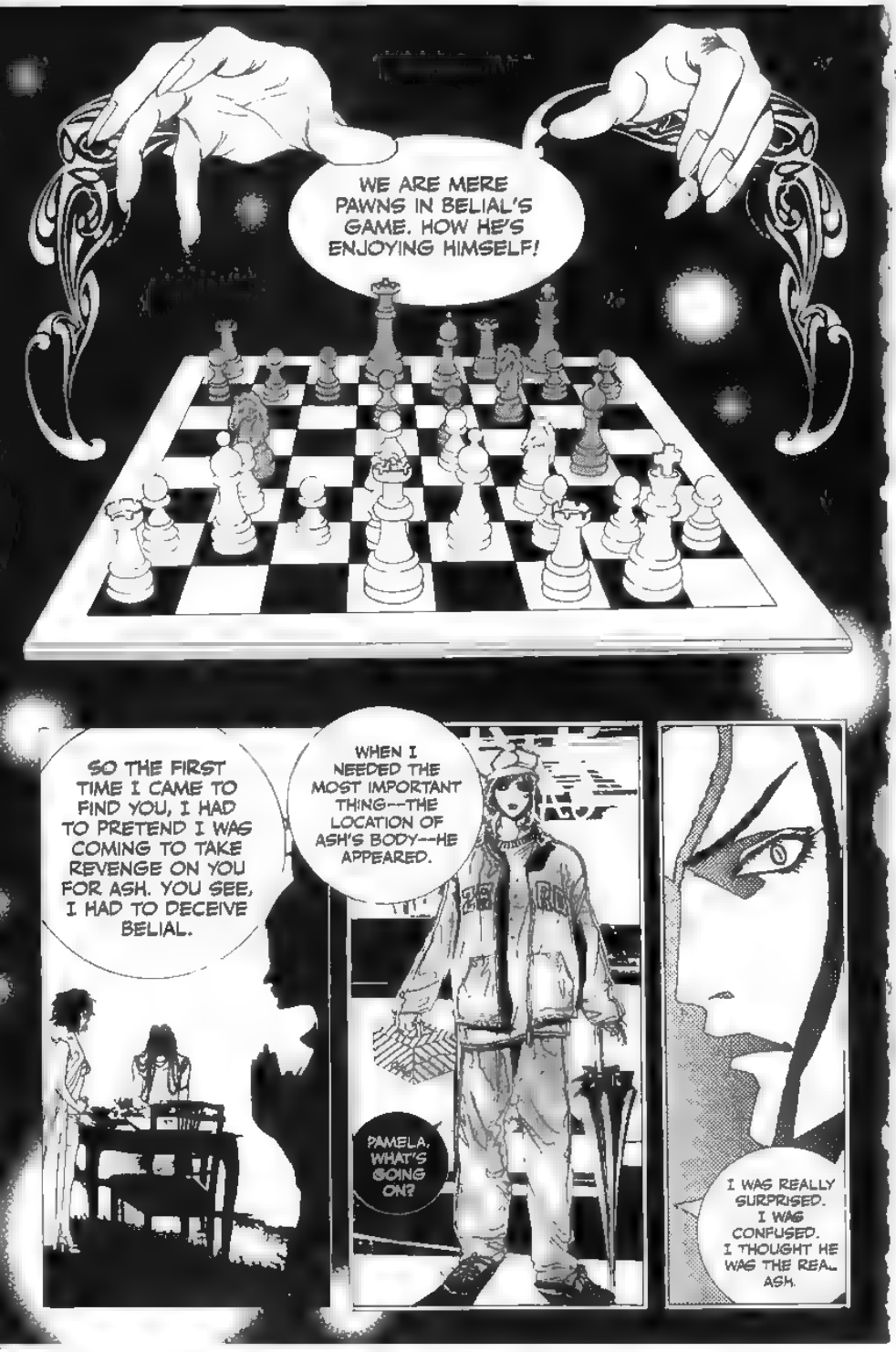
AND I WITNESSED THE DEAL THAT ASH MADE WITH BELIAL.
I THOUGHT THAT WHATEVER HAPPENED TO YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME.
AAAAAAAAH!!
MY HEART...?!!
I WAS SO ARROGANT.

THE REAL REASON WHY I AM HERE AFTER WANDERING SO LONG...
...IS IN ORDER TO KILL YOU...
...SO THAT YOU CAN NO LONGER CAUSE ME PAIN...

NO... IT CAN'T BE...
I'M A MAN-MADE DOLL...
YOU HAVE BEEN MADE, YES, BUT ONE CANNOT SAY THAT ALECTO'S WORDS ARE 100% CORRECT.
HE HASN'T LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE GAME.

AM I CONFUSING YOU?
WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS?
I WILL TELL YOU THE TRUTH.


SO IF THE DRAGON HEART IS RETURNED BACK INTO THE BODY OF ASH...
...IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO DIE?
BUT THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

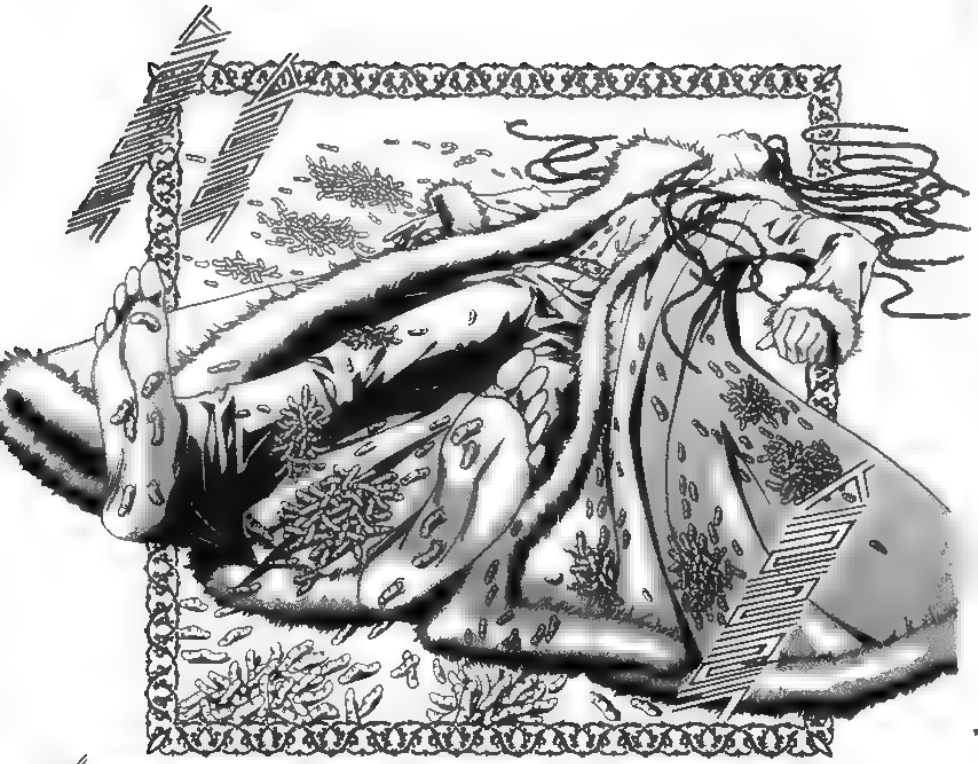

WE ARE MERE PAWNS IN BELIAL'S GAME. HOW HE'S ENJOYING HIMSELF!
SO THE FIRST TIME I CAME TO FIND YOU, I HAD TO PRETEND I WAS COMING TO TAKE REVENGE ON YOU FOR ASH. YOU SEE, I HAD TO DECEIVE BELIAL.
WHEN I NEEDED THE MOST IMPORTANT THING--THE LOCATION OF ASH'S BODY--HE APPEARED.
PAMELA, WHAT'S GOING ON?
I WAS REALLY SURPRISED. I WAS CONFUSED. I THOUGHT HE WAS THE REAL ASH.

ISN'T TYING HIM UP AND SNEAKING INTO BED A BIT SUSPICIOUS?
BUT WHY DID BELIAL MAKE A FAKE ASH?
I THOUGHT HE WAS CONNECTED TO THE REAL ASH IN SOME WAY. I THOUGHT HE COULD BE THE FINAL THING TO DRAW BELIAL OUT.

THAT THOUGHT HIT THE MARK.
TAKE CARE, CORA.
BELIAL!!
I WAS ABLE TO GET INTO BELIAL'S CASTLE USING THE FAKE ASH AS BAIT.
AND I WAS ABLE TO FIND THE BODY OF ASH THAT COULD MAKE YOU MORTAL AGAIN.
BUT THE DOLL ASH *WAS* A BIT...

I TOLD HIM THE REAL NAME, THINKING PERHAPS...
WHAT DID YOU DO, BELIAL?
AXIS GOWAMART DI ARKRAGIEL TIAMAT.
IT, IT HURTS... IT FEELS LIKE MY HEART IS RIPPING.

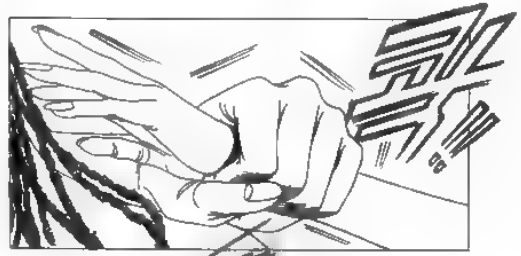
UGH!!
...?
DAMN IT...
...WHAT IS THIS?!
AH!!
TICK TICK



I WILL GIVE YOU AND PAMELA A GIFT.
PLEASE DELIVER IT SAFELY. HAH, HAH, HAH...

HAH, HAH, HAH... I THOUGHT I CAME OUT TOO EASILY...

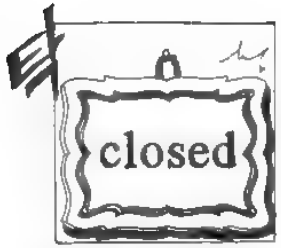
ALECTO, ARE YOU OKAY?



ALECTO, PLEASE...

YES. ALTHOUGH I'VE WANDERED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS...
...AND HAVE BEEN TO HELL AND BACK, I KNOW THAT I CANNOT RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION.
I'M SORRY, ALECTO. I... I'M CONFUSED...
UGH!!
BEWARE. WHEN YOU FALL IN LOVE, DEATH WILL TAKE YOU.

MEANING OF THE CARD: A surrender to higher principles, higher goals, self abnegation. Taking care of others. Sacrifice in order to gain wisdom. Empathy. Upside down: Lack of compassion. Avoiding pain for gain. Focus on materialism to the determent of spiritual values.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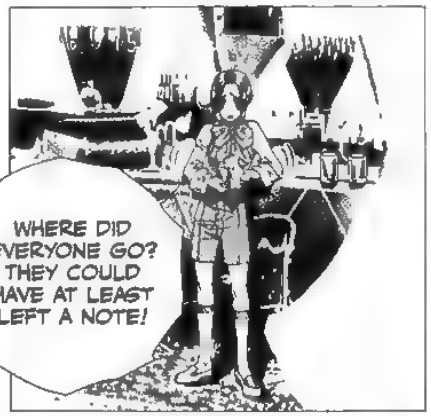
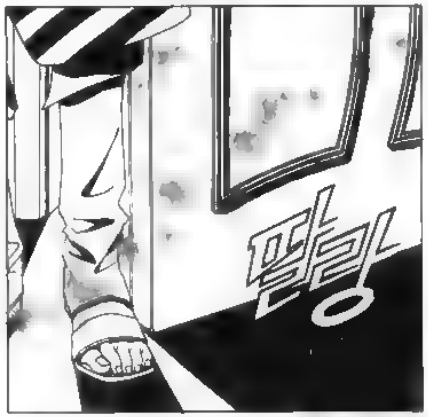

WHERE DID EVERYONE GO? THEY COULD HAVE AT LEAST LEFT A NOTE!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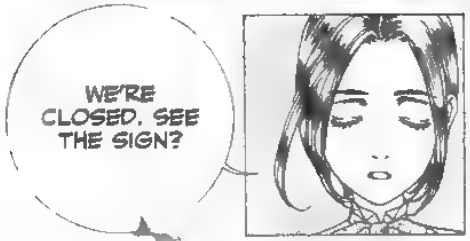

WE'RE CLOSED. SEE THE SIGN?

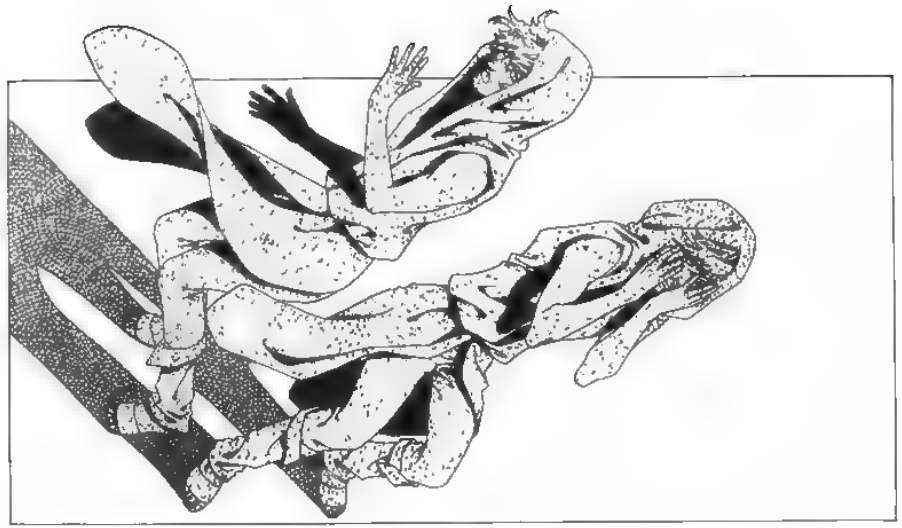
AH... ARE YOU PAMELA'S SPECIAL GUESTS?
I'M SORRY, BUT PAMELA'S NOT HERE.
I'M HERE TO SEE YOU.
WHAT?

THE KID DOESN'T REMEMBER US.
IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.
WHO ARE YOU?
SWEET DREAMS, KID.
EEK

HUH?!!
UH OH, HE'S AWAKE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH EASIER IF YOU HAD JUST STAYED ASLEEP.

LET ME GO!!
UGH!!
WHO ARE YOU GUYS? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ME?
WE ARE HARUT AND MARUT-- IMMORALITY AND MAGIC'S ANTI-ANGELS.
SOMEONE WANTS YOU FOR A PET, SO WE'RE HERE TO TAKE CARE OF IT.
TOO BAD. THIS KID IS ALREADY MINE.
?!!

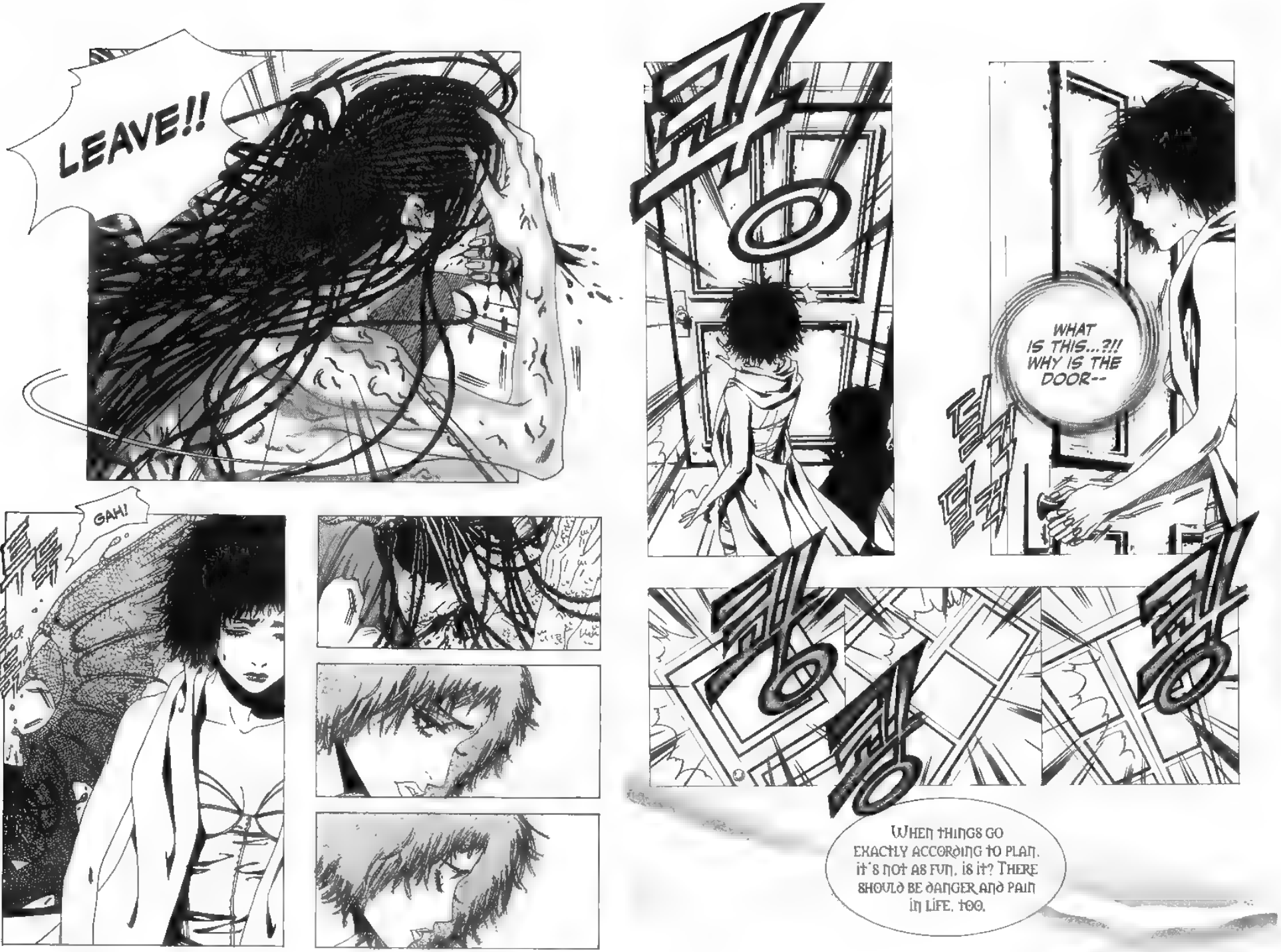
NEBIROSS?!!
I SEE YOU REMEMBER ME, HARUT AND MARUT.



I... I WAS WAITING.

LET'S GO.

THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO TO HELP ANYMORE. LEAVE!
ALECTO... WHAT'S WRONG? SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.
DON'T COME TOO CLOSE!
BELIAL PUT A "BUG OF THE INSANE" INSIDE MY BODY.
IT ENCROACHES LITTLE BY LITTLE, AND EVENTUALLY IT WILL EAT MY BRAIN AND DRIVE ME INSANE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS. WE ARE NOT IN A RELATIONSHIP...
...WHERE YOU SHOULD WORRY ABOUT ME, ANYWAY.
BUT...


LEAVE!!
GAH!
WHAT IS THIS...?!! WHY IS THE DOOR--
When things go exactly according to plan, it's not as fun, is it? There should be danger and pain in life, too.

You want to hear something funny?
But that doesn't mean I really want you to die. I just want to feel the thrill.
Alecto can present you with death right now.
He has the power to kill the immortal.
It's been a while, Pamela.

Who... are you?
Hah, hah, hah.. That's not the Pamela I know. You were the only one who was able to see my true identity
So I thought especially of you But since you've always made me happy I'll tell you
Do you remember this face? You were very young when we first met
How about this face?

YOU...
WHAT IS YOUR IDENTITY...?
I FINALLY GET TO INTRODUCE MYSELF TODAY, FORMALLY.
I'M THE GREAT PRINCE, NOBLE OF MALICE, KING OF FIRE. I'M BELIAL.
YOU'RE BELIAL?!! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED MY MOTHER! YOU SEDUCED ASH AND MADE ME THE WAY I AM?!!
YOU NEED TO GET YOUR FACTS STRAIGHT. I DIDN'T SEDUCE ASH. I'M GUESSING YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, THOUGH.

ACTUALLY THE REASON I CAME HERE WAS BECAUSE I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT SOMETHING
ARE YOU VERY FOND OF SOMEONE NAMED BELUS?
HEH, HEH, HEH... JUDGING BY YOUR EXPRESSION, I'D SAY YOU ARE.
DON'T LAY A FINGER ON HIM! HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME. IT'S ONLY A CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP.

HEH, HEH, HEH... YOU'RE A BETTER LIAR THAN I AM!
MAYBE I SHOULD CALL THIS A GAME OF SURVIVAL NOW
AS YOU KNOW, THIS IS THE SWORD THAT KILLED ASH.
IT ALSO HAS THE POWER TO GIVE ALECTO, THE DRAGON, HIS REST. USE IT WELL.
PAMELA, YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO DIE, NO?
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO SAVE HIM, YOU'D BEST STAY ALIVE.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW, COME AND FIND ME.
WAIT!!
AAAAH! FIRE!!!
HEY!!
...?

ALECTO...?
DAMN IT!
DAMN IT, BELIAL...
YOU KNOW MY WEAKNESS ALL TOO WELL.
GRRRRR...
HAS ALECTO GONE COMPLETELY MAD?

UGH!
GUAAAHH!
PAMELA!!
ARE YOU IN THERE? PAMELA!!
BELUS?!
THERE'S A MAGIC SPELL ON THE DOOR. BE PATIENT.

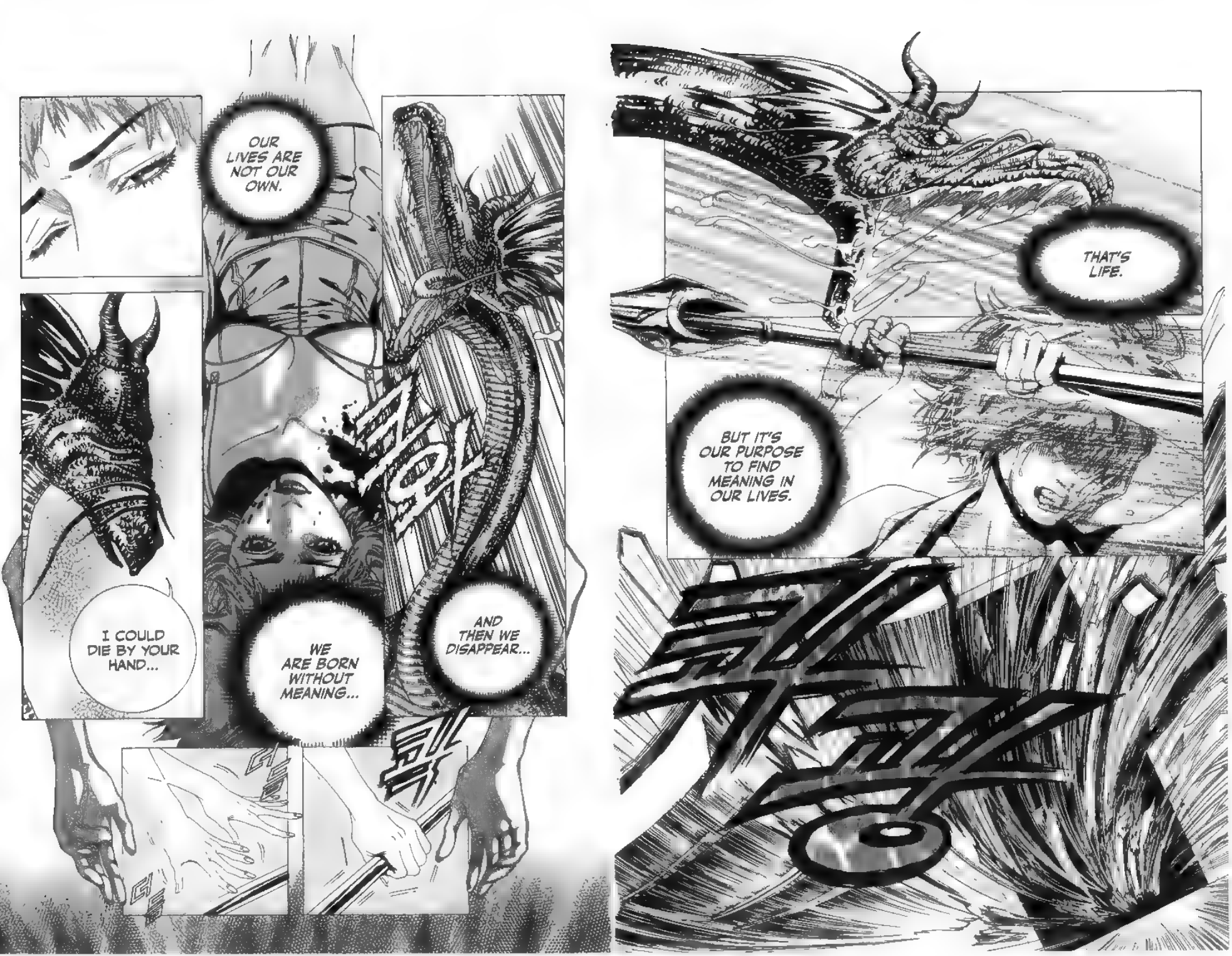
AAAAAH!
GRRRR...

THE TEMPTATION OF DEATH...
IF I DIE NOW, I COULD BE IN PEACE...
BUT...

ARE YOU VERY FOND OF SOMEONE NAMED BELUS?
IF YOU WANT TO SAVE HIM, YOU'D BEST STAY ALIVE

GUAA!

IT'S A RELIEF...


OUR LIVES ARE NOT OUR OWN.
I COULD DIE BY YOUR HAND...
WE ARE BORN WITHOUT MEANING...
AND THEN WE DISAPPEAR...
THAT'S LIFE.
BUT IT'S OUR PURPOSE TO FIND MEANING IN OUR LIVES.

PAMELA, ARE YOU OKAY?!!
OH, MAN...
BLAM!
I'M GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
THIS CRUEL TRUTH THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW...
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MY LIFE? HOW DO I GAIN THE STRENGTH TO LIVE AGAIN?

NOW, LET'S GO HOME.
WATCH OUT!!

BUT!!
HURRY!!
UGH!
GAAAA!!
UGH!
GAH!
GO OUTSIDE... PAMELA...
BELUS!!

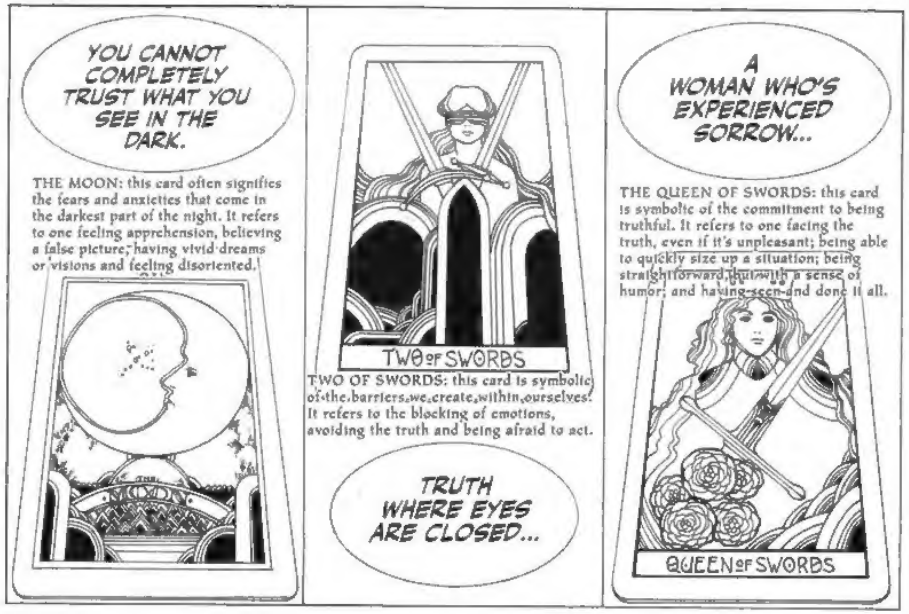
GUH!
GRRRR!

BE...LUS...?
HE HAS THE POWER TO KILL THE IMMORTAL.
COULD IT BE...
COULD IT...
COULD IT...
BELUS!!

HOSPITAL

HMMM... HIS INTERNAL ORGANS ARE SHREDDED AND EVERY BONE BROKEN.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START.

WAS IT A CAR ACCIDENT? HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?
IT LOOKS AS IF HE'S BEEN BITTEN BY AN ANIMAL OR SOMETHING.
IT'S A MIRACLE HE'S STILL ALIVE.


YOU CANNOT COMPLETELY TRUST WHAT YOU SEE IN THE DARK.
THE MOON: this card often signifies the fears and anxieties that come in the darkest part of the night. It refers to one feeling apprehension, believing a false picture, having vivid dreams or visions and feeling disoriented.
TWO OF SWORDS
TWO OF SWORDS: this card is symbolic of the barriers we create within ourselves. It refers to the blocking of emotions, avoiding the truth and being afraid to act.
TRUTH WHERE EYES ARE CLOSED...
A WOMAN WHO'S EXPERIENCED SORROW...
THE QUEEN OF SWORDS: this card is symbolic of the commitment to being truthful. It refers to one facing the truth, even if it's unpleasant; being able to quickly size up a situation; being straightforward, quick with a sense of humor; and having seen and done it all.
QUEEN OF SWORDS

OPERATION

IN THE NEXT VOLUME OF

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WITH BELUS IN CRITICAL CONDITION, PAMELA DOES EVERYTHING SHE CAN TO SAVE HIM. BUT IN ORDER TO DO SO, PAMELA MAY NEED TO SEEK THE HELP OF HER ARCH-NEMESIS, BELIAL. PAMELA RUSHES TO BELIAL'S CASTLE TO HEAL BELUS, BUT WAITING FOR HER THERE IS A REVELATION THAT MAY TEAR EVERYTHING APART.

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